

Swindon Borough Council

Town Twinning Network

Wednesday, 13 June 2012

Committee Room 2, Civic Offices (Anticipated meeting room)

At 6.00 p.m.

Conservative Councillors

Doreen Dart
Brian Mattock
Michael Bray

Labour Councillors

Kevin Small
Junab Ali
John Ballman

Roger Gower, Swindon Salzgitter Twinning Association

Mr Bruce Clarke, Swindon Ocotal Link

Mike Ide, Wroughton - St Germain les Corbeil Twinning Association

Andy Lane, Chattanooga, USA

John Mayell, Swindon Ocotal Link

Committee Officer: Alison Smith (Telephone 01793 463612)

Email: alsmith@swindon.gov.uk

Swindon Borough Council, Civic Offices, Euclid Street, Swindon, SN1 2JH

(Telephone 01793 445500)

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence

2. Declarations of Interest

Members are reminded that at the start of the meeting they should declare any known interests in any matter to be considered, and also during the meeting if it becomes apparent that they have an interest in the matters being discussed.

3. Public Question Time

See explanatory note below. Please phone the Committee Officer whose name and number appears at the top of this agenda if you need further guidance.

4. Minutes (Pages 1 - 2)

To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 28th March 2012.

5. Reports from Town Twinning Associations and Links (Pages 3 - 4)

6. Town Twinning Review - Report to Cabinet (Pages 5 - 10)

In April 2012, Cabinet requested that a review of Town Twinning be undertaken. Members of the Town Twinning Network were asked for their comments regarding this review and these comments received are attached to the agenda. The Network is requested to agree a way forward for this review.

7. Dates of Future meetings

Further dates for Town Twinning Network meetings have been agreed as:

19th September 2012 at 6pm

5th December 2012 at 6pm

27th February 2013 at 6pm

Date of Despatch: 28 May 2012

Public Question Time - Swindon Borough Council is committed to increasing its accountability to the public and to promoting active citizenship. Up to 15 minutes will be allowed at the start of all Council meetings for questions to the Chair from members of the public about the work of the Committee (except for confidential matters and specific planning applications). Questions must be relevant, clear and concise. Because of time constraints Public Question Time is not an opportunity to make speeches or statements. Prior notice of a question to the Director of Law and Democratic Services is desirable - particularly if detailed background information is needed.

Access Arrangements – The Venue is wheelchair accessible and an infrared receiver hearing system is provided. If you would wish to attend the meeting but have any special requirement to enable you to do so please contact the Committee Clerk above, as soon as possible prior to the date of the meeting.

If you would like to receive any of the pages contained in this agenda in a larger print size please contact the Committee Officer whose name appears on the first page of this agenda.

Town Twinning Network - Terms of Reference

The Town Twinning Network seeks to promote co-ordination and co-operation in the development of Twinning Links with the Twin Towns of Swindon (currently Salzgitter and Ocotal) and other existing Twinning Links with towns in the Borough. It will also encourage the development of other international friendship links between the people of the Borough of Swindon and communities in other countries.

The Town Twinning Network will act as a co-ordinating body for interested groups and individuals seeking to promote twinning links with the Twin Towns of Swindon (currently Salzgitter and Ocotal).

The Town Twinning Network will seek to co-ordinate fund raising and publicity in relation to Town Twinning but will not itself undertake these activities.

The Town Twinning Network will seek to encourage the development of international friendship links and commercial links between the people of Swindon and communities in other countries by the provision of a forum for discussion and the exchange of information.

The Town Twinning Network will receive and consider applications for Town Twinning grants and make recommendations to the Council.

The Town Twinning Network shall not hold funds or enter into any financial transactions.

TOWN TWINNING NETWORK

WEDNESDAY, 28 MARCH 2012

PRESENT:- Roger Gower (Swindon Salzgitter Twinning Association), Councillor Doreen Dart, Councillor Raymond Fisher, Andy Lane (Chattanooga, USA), Councillor Kevin Small, Councillor Brian Mattock and Councillor David Wren

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Bruce Clarke, John Mayell and Councillor Stan Pajak

10. 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.

11. Public Question Time

No public questions were received during the meeting.

12. Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 11th January 2012, be confirmed as a correct record.

Matters Arising

Councillor Kevin Small thanked members of the Town Twinning Network for their recommendation that £500 be awarded as a contribution towards his town twinning grant application.

13. Reports from Town Twinning Associations and Links

The Network considered (a) a report of the Director of Law and Democratic Services listing the Town Twinning Associations and Links in and around Swindon and (b) the following reports from those Town Twinning associations and Links present at the meeting:-

Swindon Ocotal Link (SOL)

Jill reported on the following activities:

- Karen and Stephen were already in Ocotal and Rita would be joining them on 12th April.
- The Rotary project would be successfully completed through the use of a sponsoring rotary club.
- An artist would be coming to Swindon in October who would like to paint a mural somewhere in Swindon. It was suggested that SOL liaise with Helen Miah for possible locations.
- The next meeting would be held on 3rd April.

Swindon Salzgitter Twinning Association

Roger Gower thanked the members of the Network for their kind regards during his hospital stay. He was now completely recovered.

The visit to Salzgitter will take place from 13th - 20th June 2012 and 10 members would be making the trip. Transfers to and from the airport and flights had been arranged. SSTA members would be met at Hannover Airport by bus for transfer to hosts' homes. The programme of events would include:-

- A meeting with the group from the Salzgitter equivalent of the U3A who are learning English. The SSTA have been asked to give a short talk about Swindon to this group.
- A tour of Salzgitter
- A trip to nearby village to visit its castle and museum
- A trip to Berlin – including the Reichstag, the Brandenburg Gate and a river trip.
- A tour of a railway museum to reinforce the connection between our two towns through the historic importance of rail transport.

The SSTA has gained a further 3 members but has lost 4.

Roger has now developed a colour brochure explaining briefly the aims and objectives of the SSTA together with information on the activities, visits and membership costs. Councillor Dart agreed to place a black and white copy in Councillor's pigeon holes for their information. It was also planned to place copies in local libraries and community centres. Roger reported that he was also hoping to write a short article on twinning between Swindon and Salzgitter for inclusion in the monthly newsletter of the Swindon U3A.

Councillor Wren asked about the difference between this group and the Civic visits to Salzgitter, particularly in light of the Mayor's visit to celebrate the 60th anniversary. Members of the Network were unaware of this visit and it was felt that there should be better communication between the Mayor's office and the Network and that the Network should be made aware of any Civic visits taking place.

Chattanooga

Andy Lane reported that his contact in Chattanooga was currently unavailable but that he hoped to make progress in the near future.

14. Review of Town Twinning

The Clerk advised that Cabinet had requested that a review of Town Twinning be undertaken and a report submitted to them. It was agreed that the clerk would send out an email to all Town Twinning Network members seeking their views on the future of Town Twinning in Swindon and that this would be incorporated into the report to be submitted to Cabinet.

Reports from the Town Twinning Associations and Links

Town Twinning Network

Date: 13 June 2012

Author:	Director of Law and Democratic Services
Wards:	All
Locality Affected:	All
Parishes Affected:	All

1. Purpose and Reasons

1.1 To provide verbal reports updating members of the Town Twinning Network on the activities of the following Town Twinning Associations and Links since the last meeting held on 28th March 2012:-

- Swindon Salzgitter Twinning Association
- Swindon Ocotal Link
- Swindon Torun Link
- Chattanooga, USA
- Wroughton – St Germain les Corbeil Twinning Association
- Highworth-Pontorson Twinning Association
- Other Twins/Links present at the meeting

1.2 To keep the Town Twinning Network informed of the activities of the Town Twins and Links within Swindon and its surrounding areas and to provide a forum for these groups to exchange information and areas of good practice.

2. Recommendations

The Town Twinning Network is recommended to:

2.1 Note the activities of the Twinning Associations and Links.

3. Detail

3.1 The Town Twinning Network seeks to promote co-ordination and co-operation in the development of Twinning Links and in the development of other International friendship links between the people of Swindon and communities in other Countries.

3.2 The Town Twinning Network meets four times a year in order to encourage the development of International friendship links and commercial links between the people of Swindon and communities in other Countries by the provision of a forum for discussion and the exchange of information.

3.3 Each of the Town Twins and Links will give a verbal update at the meeting on the activities that have been undertaken since the last Town Twinning Network meeting.

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Alison Smith, Direct Dial 463612, alsmith@swindon.gov.uk.

Reports from the Town Twinning Associations and Links

Town Twinning Network

Date: 13 June 2012

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 There are no alternative options.

5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 There are no direct financial or procurement implications relating to this update. Any future activity that has financial implications would be subject to a separate report.

Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.2 This report has no specific legal or human rights implications.

All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 5.3 This report has no specific implications relating to staff, sustainability, health, rural, crime and disorder.

Links to One Swindon, Strategic Objectives, Plans and Policies

- 5.4 There are no specific links between Town Twinning and One Swindon, Strategic Objectives, Plans and Policies.

Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.5 A Diversity Impact Assessment has not been completed for this report. This is because it relates to verbal updates from Town Twins and Links present at the meeting, with no changes to staffing, budget or service eligibility criteria.

Risk Management

- 5.6 A risk assessment has not been undertaken.

6. Consultees

- 6.1 The Board Director Finance, Revenues, Benefits and Property (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

7. Background Papers

- 7.1 None

8. Appendices

- 8.1 None
-

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Alison Smith, Direct Dial 463612, alsmith@swindon.gov.uk.

Feedback received regarding the Town Twinning Review requested by Cabinet.

Roger Gower (Swindon Salzgitter Group):

The Town Twinning Network offers the following important support to an individual twinning association such as ours:

- The existence of the TTN shows the commitment the SDC has for twinning.
- If the TTN didn't exist there would be problems in operating a twinning group simply because there would be the need to identify who one needs to deal with. This would be especially exacerbated with a change of officers in the twinning group.
- There are opportunities to meet with other local twinning groups and exchange ideas on the most effective ways of running a twinning group.
- The TTN offers individual twinning groups an excellent way of understanding the functions of the Council and get advice on whom to talk when Council assistance is needed.
- Although advice can be gained from existing long-standing members of our association, the TTN has corporate knowledge of how individual associations have run in the past. This can improve the efficiency of how these groups are managed now and in the future.
- The modest funds made available to the Swindon Salzgitter Twinning Association through the TTN have been vital in allowing us to fulfil our commitments to hosting visitors from Germany.

Mike Ide (Wroughton Twinning Association):

- *What benefits your group has gained/hopes to gain from twinning activities (social, economic etc)*
Wroughton is a 'Peoples Twinning' group of people who are interested in the life of people in our partner community. We benefit by participating in our exchange visits to France, from experiencing life in French homes in a community similar to Wroughton and from educational and cultural visits during our visits and 'en route' to St. Germain. We also benefit from enjoying our social events in Swindon and devising a social programme when we entertain a group from France when we are proud to show them our everyday lives in our homes.
- *How you feel Swindon and its residents have benefitted from your twinning activities*
The benefits to the group (as given above) devolve to our members who, while mostly from Wroughton, all live in Swindon including Highworth, Toothill, Lawn and Pinehurst.
- *How do you see twinning developing over the next 10 years*
Interest in Twinning has declined since 1980 and is now in its last stages. Our members are mostly retired and we do not expect to be

able to undertake or receive a group visit of twenty plus persons again. We intend to continue our social programme and explore the opportunity for small-scale exchange visits. A parallel situation exists in France.

- *What support/resources do you need from the Council in order to be successful*

We were grateful for the financial support in the last few years when our membership became old and few in number. We were not as energetic in fund-raising as in our younger days and the economics of coach hire when the numbers reduced from 30 to below 20 made money even tighter. However we don't anticipate needing support in future as we will not be running big events any more.

- *What could be done differently*

The Town Twinning Network could be wound up to save council-tax.

- *How do you feel the Town Twinning Network supports the activities of your group*

When a twinning forum was originally set up (around 1997?) on the initiative of David Martin, there was a useful exchange of ideas between several 'Peoples Twinning' groups who were alike in wanting to run exchange visits on a shoestring (after a bit of fundraising) and who enjoyed being guests and hosts with foreigners in private homes. Once the group evolved into this one, run on council lines, another model of twinning took over in which people stay in hotels, travel by taxi, and claim expenses. This is not twinning as we see it and we feel the Network is not relevant to our twinning any more.

Bruce Clarke (Swindon Ocotal Link):

What benefits your group has gained/hopes to gain from twinning activities (social, economic etc)

Firstly, I would hope the review goes beyond the formal Twinning arrangements to include school links, community links and other business links.

Twinning has given our group an opportunity to work together on a project of civic and community value. It has provided a foundation experience of international awareness for the many hundreds young people who have participated in twinning activities.

- How you feel Swindon and its residents have benefitted from your twinning activities

Schools, community lunch clubs, old people's homes, Rotary, Festival of Literature, Swindon Festivals, Swindon Mela, Duke of Edinburgh's awards, Swindon Library, Torun and Saltzgitter twinning groups and Mayor's office have all benefited. Particular town wide support was gained during the

Evening Advertiser appeal that raised £30,000 and 7 tons of aid to the town following the Hurricane Mitch disaster; aid that was transported by an RAF Lynham hercules aircraft.

- How do you see twinning developing over the next 10 years

Without a clear strategic position within council's business plan twinning will continue as it is at the moment; based on the initiative of a few people. If given a larger role the activists are capable of delivering a more inclusive civic service. The adoption of service agreements in return for resources, both in kind and or financial, would bring council officers into the discussion about what the various link organisations can do. The role of twinning will develop into establishing international links probably not twinning in its traditional sense but working links that meet educational, business and community interests.

- What support/resources do you need from the Council in order to be successful

Firstly, we need recognition by Department Heads and Lead Members of the potential resources that twinning can bring to the Council. The council is not buying a service rather it is engaging the support of activists to further the international profile of the town. In-kind networking resources would be very helpful. a) Inclusion in Swindon News about Twinning/Linking activities b) Provision of meeting rooms and minuting / secretarial support c) invitation to twinning groups to work with economic and social projects. d) Invitation by schools to provide input into citizenship, history and geography themes. e) Access to printing and design services f) support with an annual twinning/linking event free room or hall facilities g) access to the Council's website

- What could be done differently

I think the starting point is to recognise that twinning or linking will continue to happen regardless of the Council's position or support. This is because twinning arises from the interests of communities, schools, businesses and clubs to forge meaningful links with international partners. The term Twinning maybe a problem. See the activity as an **International Relations Network** would open up the meeting and acknowledge the Mayor's civic role in receiving and facilitating exchanges.

Given that international links emerge all the time the Council might wish to establish a sustainable policy that included:

A stronger Mayoral input into any international visits.

Formal recognition by the Mayor of linking groups and higher level backing to important international relationships. This would require those international linking groups or activities, that wish to be recognised, to meet minimal reporting and structural conditions in return for use of the Civic logo,

Mayoral presence at events and so on. Possibly some sort of a 'recognised by the Mayor's office' status.

Help with communication, bringing together linking groups, marketing and raising the profile of twinning/linking, celebrating the diverse mix of links. All of this goes beyond the formal civic 'twinning' to include all the international links.

The Town Twinning Network has the official responsibility of reporting on Swindon Borough's formal twinning links. This can't be changed but what could be done differently would be to run bi-monthly meetings with an agenda geared to hearing about twinning or international activities from across the Borough and beyond with a mind to scheduling events and producing a news update based on the minutes. These updates be circulated to media and news networks using the borough's communication networks and website. This function of circulating news and notices of events would attract more members and would greatly assist groups to promote their activities and successes.

- How do you feel the Town Twinning Network supports the activities of your group

The network offers its members an important connection to the Mayor's office and the status of being a civic organisation. It places a responsibility on its members to report on activities in a public setting and therefore increases the accountability of the organisation. The small amount of funding is helpful for specific occasions. However, the network offers the minimum level of support and it struggles to gain the attention of Department Heads and Lead Members.

Conclusion

With no real increase in resources the network could take on a bigger role of being an international relations network, the council could identify how the various groups and activities can support the council's work, greater use of existing services providing in-kind support together with an agreed budget.

Ray Fisher (former Councillor on Town Twinning Network):

I think the Network has been useful for those who network through it. It could be really useful if it were used by designated Cabinet member/s to coordinate all the networking that goes on around the town, Trade Missions, Business Members' Clubs, Japanese lessons – the opportunities are limitless.

Councillor Kevin Small

I support Ray's comments and would also add that Town twining can give a social and economic benefit to the borough. SBC through the TTN need to promote twining more, senior council members and officers need to support twining, and we should look to make more of EU funding to support this activity.

A number of Local Authorities were contacted to find out their arrangements with regards to Town Twinning activities. Only one response was received from Reading Borough Council:

'Reading has four twin towns and links with others, it was felt that while useful to have the representatives from each of the town twinning organisations to get together four times a year, it amounted to little more than an information exchange, Councillors who were appointed rarely turned up to the meetings, attendance was negligible, some of the twinning organisations had very small memberships and couldn't send any representation so as part of the budget cuts it was felt that it wasn't worth the while for the Committee team to continue its support.

Most of the twinning activities were arranged by, or certainly advertised through the Council's promotions team who attended the meetings anyway, and that is now the sum of the officer support for the group. I don't think we even appoint any councillors to the body any more. If it still meets the meetings are organised by themselves, although I suspect council rooms can be made available if they so wished.'

This page is intentionally left blank