

Update on Town Twinning Grants

Town Twinning Network

Date: 3rd March 2010

Author: Director of Law and Democratic Services

Parish / Wards Affected: All

Purpose

- To inform members of the Town Twinning Network of the funds currently available for Town Twinning grants and the background to how these funds were established, as requested at the last meeting of the Network held on 2nd December 2009.

Recommendation

The Town Twinning Network is requested to

- Note the contents of the report.

1. Reasons

- 1.1 At the meeting held on 2nd December 2009, members of the Town Twinning Network requested further information be provided in order to clarify the current level of funds available for Town Twinning grants from the Council and the criteria that was originally used to establish these funds.

2. Detail

- 2.1 The Town Twinning Network has no budget provided by the Council. In 2001, Mr. Derek Benfield (then Chair of the Network, a Councillor and former Mayor of the Borough) asked, and the Cabinet agreed, that any surplus on the Civic Twinning budget of £6000 (used for funding Civic visits between Swindon and Salzgitter and Ocotal) rather than being absorbed into the Council's reserves as an efficiency saving should be put into a separate reserve account to be used for small grants to support Town Twinning activities. It was agreed that the Network would be involved in the process associated with awarding such grants.
- 2.2 The Civic Twinning budget enabled the official civic twinning activities between the Council and its twin towns to take place, allowing the Mayor of Salzgitter and guests to visit Swindon every other year and the Mayor of Swindon and guests to visit Salzgitter in the intervening years. The cost of hosting visitors from Salzgitter was usually greater than sending visitors to Salzgitter and therefore every other year there should be some surplus available from this budget.

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- 2.3 Because of Budget pressures and the need to make efficiency savings in the financial year 2006/2007 the Civic Twinning budget was reduced to £2,000. The Budget has remained cash limited at £2000 every year from this date and has not increased with inflation. This means that this budget now rarely under spends on the official Civic visits and, in fact, in recent years of visits from Salzgitter costs have exceeded budget and use has had to be made of the reserve fund to balance the budget. Therefore there has been no surplus to transfer to the reserve fund for Town Twinning grants for some years. The Council has not allocated any monies to support the Network or to this reserve and the budget (reserve fund) will therefore decline with every Town Twinning grant awarded or any overspend on the cost of the official Civic Twinning activities (visits).
- 2.4 All Town Twinning grants are authorised by the Director of Law and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Lead Member for Twinning, the Chief Executive, the grants team and the Town Twinning Network. All views are taken on board but the final decision on the award of any Town Twinning grants lies with the Director of Law and Democratic Services.
- 2.5 At the time of writing this report, the reserve fund available for Town Twinning grants was £4250.

Alternative Options

- There are no alternative options as this report is for information only.

Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- The reserve fund available for Town Twinning grants is currently £4250. The Council does not allocate any monies to this reserve and therefore it will decline with every grant awarded or any overspend on the cost of Civic Twinning visits.

Legal / Human Rights Implications

- This report has no specific Legal or Human Rights implications.

Links to Corporate Plans and Policies (in particular to Swindon 2010 Promises)

- There are no specific links to Corporate Plans or Policies for Town Twinning activities.

Consultees

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from *Alison Smith* on Direct Dial No. 3612 or Email alsmith@swindon.gov.uk.

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The Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.