

Notes from meeting on the structure of town twinning June 1st 2010

Andy Lane, David Martin and Bruce Clarke

1. It was agreed that the current arrangements enable twinning and friendship groups to achieve various levels of civic recognition and this was felt to be helpful.
2. The funding, albeit small, was also helpful and regular reporting keeps members of the network up to date.
3. It was felt that it was the right time for the network to consider moving to the next level of its development due to the following drivers:
 - a) Despite the success of the individual links it is clear that the Council does not have a policy for International Development and for many reasons and competing priorities does not place value on the work of the linking groups or see how the friendship and twinning links can support the Council's strategic objectives. It was also felt that in the current climate this position will not improve and may diminish further.
 - b) The Network is facing its own funding crisis
 - c) The development of the network is hampered by the SBC structure of a Council committee because;
 - a. It does not have control of its finances.
 - b. membership lacks criteria and as such does not place demands on its members leading to atrophy of the network and failure to bring together the extensive linking that goes on in the town.
 - c. Further it was felt that due to no policy on International linking the Council was unlikely to lead on European applications.
4. Yet what was clear was the Civic link to the Mayors office of the various network members was valued by groups and should not be lost. Discussion was had about clarifying the distinction between the Council's executive and the role of Mayor. It was also discussed that the network had a responsibility to supporting the Mayor's office with recommendations and civic arrangements.

Conclusions:

1. **Stay the same** – Given the climate this was the least favoured approach
2. **Become a separate group** – loss of the link to the Mayors Office would a mistake.
3. **Form an 'arms length' civic twinning/friendship organisation** – This proposal would see an organisation set up as legal entity that enshrines its civic responsibilities to the Mayors represented in the network. It would be able to raise funds through grants and EU funding sources maintain a close relationship with authorities through service level agreements and seek sponsors such as the Bristol Twinning example that is housed in the University of West of England.

The proposal at this stage is for the network to decide if it wishes to make changes or not and if so what direction to go in. The meeting recommend we adopt the third approach.