

TOWN TWINNING NETWORK

WEDNESDAY, 29 SEPTEMBER 2010

PRESENT:- Councillors Doreen Dart (Chair), Raymond Fisher, Eric Shaw and Kevin Small; Derrick Gustafson (Highworth Twinning Association), Mr Bruce Clarke (Swindon Ocotal Link), Andy Lane (Chattanooga, USA), David Martin (Geminid), Mark Sarnowski (Swindon Torun Link) and Lawrence Murphy (Forward Swindon).

A representative from the Police was also in attendance.

Apologies for absence were received from John Hamilton, Councillor Stan Pajak, Hassan Nur and Tom Wilkes.

18. 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.

19. Public Question Time

No public questions were received during the meeting.

20. Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 2nd June 2010 be confirmed as a correct record.

21. Role of the Town Twinning Network in supporting Twinning and Friendship Links in and around Swindon

The Network considered (a) a report of the Director of Law and Democratic Services outlining how the Network and Swindon Borough Council support Town Twinning activities within the Borough of Swindon; (b) the submission from Bruce Clarke on establishing an autonomous International Linking group and (c) the comments from Lawrence Murphy, representative from Forward Swindon.

Lawrence Murphy reported that there were areas where Forward Swindon could assist in developing economic links with twin towns and links although the focus of Forward Swindon was very much sector led rather than looking at links from a geographical point of view. He added that it was about managing expectations and that it may be possible to support specific projects within the resources available. Where resources were not available, advice could be given as to other organisations that may be in a better position to offer assistance.

Members of the Network felt that more could be done to educate officers, Councillors and members of the public on the benefits of twinning and of establishing economic links and the value that this can bring to Swindon. It was felt

that Swindon were missing out on a number of opportunities for inward investment and that, whilst there were grants available for a variety of initiatives, there appeared to be a lack of interest in pursuing these opportunities.

Members of the Network considered the proposal submitted by Bruce Clarke that support be given to David Martin's initiative to establish an independent International linking group whilst the Town Twinning network continues as the Borough's formal Town Twinning Committee. The independent group would report to the twinning meeting of any activities being undertaken. This proposal was agreed by the members of the Town Twinning Network.

David Martin advised that he was keen that the second International Youth Festival should be held in Swindon and members of the Network were keen to support the delivery of this project and asked for a progress report to be brought to the next meeting of the Network.

Resolved – That the Town Twinning Network (a) thank Lawrence Murphy from Forward Swindon for attending the meeting; (b) note the report of the Director of Law and Democratic Services; (c) request that the Director of Law and Democratic Services review the constitution of the Town Twinning Network; (d) support David Martin's initiative to establish a separate International group; and (e) request a progress report on the possibility of the second International Youth Festival coming to Swindon.

22. 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 verbal reports from the Town Twinning Associations and Links:

Nova Hreod School

Tom Wilkes reported that Nova Hreod School would be sending a party of 3 staff to South Africa for one week from 23rd October who will be working at Harold Cressy School.

He also advised that one member of staff and six students from the school had participated in a very successful International conference that was held in Salzgitter during July.

Swindon Salzgitter Twinning Association

Councillor Small advised that he was considering an exchange between football referees in Salzgitter and those in Swindon during the football season.

Swindon Ocotal Link (SOL)

Bruce Clarke advised that SOL had been unsuccessful in their bid for EU money as there were not enough partners involved in the bid. There had been the intention to bring 3 visitors over from Ocotal but, due to visa issues, only one visitor had been able to come to Swindon. Bruce added that SOL were currently revising the vision and objectives of the group and he would feed back on any progress at a future meeting of the Network.

Swindon Torun Link

Mark Sarnowski reported that there had recently been a very successful visit to Torun of about 30 people and he advised that the Chamber of Commerce group were keen to visit Swindon. It was hoped that the photographic exhibition would take place during October and that this may be combined with inviting some runners from Torun to take part in the Bath half marathon.

Bruce Clarke added that 5 SOL members had joined the trip to Torun and were very impressed with the hospitality they had received and with the cultural and economic vibrance of Torun. He advised members of the Network that he would be bringing a proposal to the next meeting requesting that a formal twinning arrangement is made between Torun and Swindon.

A slide show of the visit to Torun was displayed at the end of the meeting by Bruce.

Highworth Twinning Association

Derrick Gustafson reported that about 60 people would be visiting Pontorson from 23 – 26 October and that the Mayor would also be going as this was the 20th anniversary of twinning between Highworth and Swindon. In June 2011, visitors from Wassenberg would be invited over the Highworth and there would be another visit to Pontorson in May. He advised that Wassenberg were usually successful in obtaining EU grants and were able to help Highworth Twinning Association with their travel costs.

Chattanooga Friendship Link

Andy Lane advised that a project was underway and that he would report on progress at a future meeting of the Network.

Geminid

David Martin advised that Isambard School had been successful in receiving Comenius funding, although St Andrews School, whilst scoring highly on the application form, had been unsuccessful as the Head had not realised they had to send the form back in. He advised that there was the opportunity to put a bid in for the exchange of Local Authority officers, such as Museums staff in order to work to common strategies.

Disneyland

Lawrence Murphy gave a brief overview of some of the initiatives being undertaken as part of this link and advised that the formal agreement with Disneyland would end on 31st December 2010.

23. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Town Twinning Network will be held on Wednesday 1st December 2010 at 6pm

