

TOWN TWINNING NETWORK

WEDNESDAY, 13 JUNE 2012

PRESENT:- Councillors Doreen Dart (Chair), Junab Ali and John Ballman; Mr Bruce Clarke (Swindon Ocotal Link), Andy Lane (Chattanooga, USA) and Hasan Nur (potential link with Somalia).

Apologies for absence were received from Roger Gower, Mike Ide, John Mayell, Councillor Brian Mattock and Councillor Michael Bray.

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 28 March 2012, be confirmed as a correct record.

18. 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 those Town Twinning Associations and Links present at the meeting:-

Swindon Salzgitter Twinning Association

The Chair advised that visit to Salzgitter was currently underway and that the Association now had 10 new members, some of which were participating in this visit to Salzgitter. She also advised that Roger Gower, Chair of the Salzgitter Twinning Association, was now back to good health.

Swindon Ocotal Link (SOL)

Bruce Clarke reported on the following activities:

- Three volunteers (two doctors and a nurse) had recently returned from Ocotal, having spent two and a half months over there. A number of medical cases were dealt with during their visit.
- One of the volunteers, Dr Steve Rhodes took part in a marathon during his visit and, along with other events, raised £1400.
- Three projects were currently underway, two of which were Rotary based:
 1. Provision of electricity for a disability access centre (Swindon Rotary Club)

2. Putting funding proposal together to replace the roof on the Casa Materna (Thamesdown Rotary Club)
 3. Swindon Church seeking to support women of violence.
- A local artist from Ocotal would be visiting Swindon from 1 – 21 October 2012 and would be working with Swindon Borough Council's Art Team.
 - Duck race was to take place at Castle Eaton on 15th July at 1pm at a cost of £10 per person.
 - Bruce advised that he was keen to participate in the Wootton Bassett visit to Blain in August – cost was £100 for four days.
 - SOL meet on the first Tuesday of every month at the Civic Offices at 7.30pm.

Chattanooga

Andy Lane reported that there was nothing further to report since the last meeting.

Potential Link with Salahley in Somaliland

Hasan Nur updated members of the Network with the progress of the Somaliland Association. He explained that the community had been in Swindon for about 10 years and that there were currently about 35 members of the Association although the Association did not yet have charitable status. The Association had already raised money to help build a school and a clinic. Hasan had met with the Mayor of Salahley who was keen to develop a link with Swindon and members of the Network agreed that a letter of support/recognition should be requested from the Mayor of Swindon.

19. Town Twinning Review - Report to Cabinet

Members of the Network discussed the review of Town Twinning, as requested by Cabinet and raised the following issues:-

- That Twinning activities should be taken seriously by the Council and the Mayor's office in order to be effective.
- Councillors and officers need to understand the benefits that twinning can bring to Swindon.
- There was a need for a European Officer/someone with the appropriate skills to assist with completing application forms for external funding (currently, this resource does not exist).
- Use of existing resources for visits such as using Lydiard for accommodation and Swindon Commercial Services for transport.
- The role of the Civic badge is particularly important – provides groups with the support they need in order to progress. Need for closer linking with the Mayor's office.
- Access to the Council's web site to promote twinning activities.
- Possibility of changing the name from 'twinning' to, say 'international links'.

It was agreed that the clerk would put together a report for Cabinet and circulate it to members of the Network.

20. Dates of Future meetings

Dates for future Town Twinning Network meetings have been agreed as:-

19th September 2012 at 6pm

5th December 2012 at 6pm
27th February 2013 at 6pm