

**REPORT TO A MEETING OF THE CULTURAL AND COMMUNITY COMMITTEE TO BE HELD ON 2<sup>ND</sup> APRIL 2012**

**TOWN TWINNING CONFERENCES**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 At the Meeting of the Committee on 6<sup>th</sup> March, initial consideration was given to a proposal submitted by the Bruhl Twinning Society to host a series of Conferences over the period 2013-2014 involving each of the Towns with which Bruhl is presently "twinned". Thus Conferences are intended to take place at Bruhl, Sceaux, Royal Leamington Spa and Kunice (Poland). Some of these conferences will be associated with the scheduled Twinning Exchanges.

1.2 The Meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on 20<sup>th</sup> February approved the attendance of the Mayor, Councillor Amanda Stevens and the Town Clerk at an initial exploratory meeting at Bruhl on 25<sup>th</sup> March at which the purpose and outcomes of such Conferences were to be outlined in greater detail. This Report summarises the conclusions of the Meeting at Bruhl and the implications of the Conference proposal for future "Twinning" activity between the partner Towns.

**2. EUROPEAN UNION TWINNING CITIZENSHIP PROGRAMME**

2.1 The proposal for periodic Partnership Conferences emanates from the European Commission – the Europe for Citizens Programme. At a time when the European Union faces particular challenges due to the economic crisis and the uncertainties around the continued participation of some Member States, the Commission is promoting opportunities to help engage citizens in becoming more actively involved in activities which foster integration and a better understanding of the European identity. The programme sets out the following objectives:-

- Encourage citizens to become actively involved in the process of European integration
- Enable citizens to develop a sense of European identity
- Enhance mutual understanding between European citizens

The Programme further aims to:

- Encourage citizens to take part in exchanges and activities beyond their national borders
- Foster debate and reflection on the EU's basic values
- Stimulate networking
- Strengthen the capacity of Non-Governmental Organisations and research bodies to contribute to EU policy-making

The results of the Programme will provide lessons for developing policies on active citizenship in Europe.

2.2 The Programme is divided into a number of discreet areas for action of which the first, Active Citizens for Europe, is most closely related to Twinning.

2.3 Town twinning has long been an important mechanism for developing active European citizenship and a sense of shared identity. One major advantage of town twinning is that it involves directly large numbers of citizens, illustrating the benefits of EU integration at the local level and helping citizens from different Member States build bonds and develop a sense of common European identity.

2.4 Citizen meetings are the traditional mechanisms for town-twinning exercises. The Commission supports gatherings of a wide range of citizens and citizens' groups from twinned towns, benefiting from the partnership between municipalities to develop strong, informal and personal relations between their citizens. It is envisaged that these meetings should be characterised by active civic participation. This could be done by involving the local community in the planning and implementation of the project; granting participants an active role through displays, workshops, joint cultural performances, etc.; and ensuring that meetings are truly a joint endeavour between all the towns involved.

2.5 The innovation of Partnership Conferences is therefore supported by the Commission within the following financial limits

- **Project duration:** maximum 21 days
- **Grant allocation:** the maximum grant to be awarded is € 25000 per project. A maximum of € 40000 per project can apply if at least 10 towns participate in the project. The minimum grant awarded is € 5000.
- Funding allocated to a lead partner in ratio 50% before commencing the project and 50% on completion

### 3. PARTNERSHIP CONFERENCES

3.1 The proposal outlined at the Meeting at Bruhl is that a series of partnership conferences are therefore arranged by the four Towns over a two year period, accessing the funding available within the Active Citizens Programme (ACP). To secure the maximum funding of € 25,000 it would be necessary to attract at least 101 participants to each of the Conferences.

3.2 The European Grant is to be used to meet the costs associated with organising the Conference, including delegate accommodation, subsistence and travel. The EU grant cannot finance the entire costs of the project. Promoters must show their commitment to the project by finding financing sources other than the Union grant. This can be done, for example, by running fund-raising activities, by adding own resources, or by requesting grants from other organisations (e.g. local or regional authorities, foundations, etc.).

3.3 A suggested programme of Conferences was outlined at the Meeting in Bruhl and is set out at Appendix 1. A report will need to be submitted to the European Union at the conclusion of the Project by the Grant beneficiary.

A Commission representative may also attend a Conference to assess outcomes against the objectives of the Citizenship Programme.

3.4 The closing date for submitting an application for Conferences to be held in 2013 is 1<sup>st</sup> September 2012.

3.5 At the meeting at Bruhl, it was evident that the opportunity to secure EU funding through the ACP was seen as an important vehicle to renew commitment to the existing Twinning Charters and to reach out to new groups of citizens. The forging of new partnerships is therefore a touchstone for the ACP and the Conference proposal recognises this implicitly. It has been observed many times that twinning as a concept needs to be owned and championed by Communities rather than institutions.

3.6 It would be for each of the partner Towns to determine the format of their "home" Conference and the participating Groups and individuals invited to take part in it.

3.7 The expectation on each of the four partner Towns is to:-

- Support the application for EU funding through the ACP
- Attend the Conferences arranged in the Partner Towns (Sceaux/Bruhl/Kunice)
- Host one Conference during the 2 year period of the programme
- Provide appropriate organisational and funding support

3.8 The hosting of a Conference in most cases is timed to coincide with a planned twinning exchange visit.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The Committee will be aware that at present the Council retains a relatively small budget for Twinning, a significant proportion of which is allocated to the Leamington International Twinning Society to assist with the cost of hosting Civic events that coincide with the periodic visits to the Town by the Twin Town delegations.

4.2 It is evident that whilst the availability of EU funding through the ACP will help defray some of the costs associated with accommodation and subsistence charges etc. there will be significant other costs associated with venue hire, translation services and administrative support for the Conference itself. A detailed financial appraisal will be drawn up for consideration of the Council should it be agreed to proceed with supporting the proposal in principle.

#### **5. CONCLUSIONS/ RECOMMENDATION**

5.1 The concept of hosting Conferences based on a theme related to the objectives of the EU ACP is recognised as assisting in a process that ultimately may help to secure the future of twinning and reconnect communities with the original ideals

set out in the Twinning Charters. Success will be dependent on the degree to which organisers devise a meaningful programme that meets the wider EU objectives and captures the public imagination.

5.2 The success of the programme will be dependent on the Municipal Authorities actively supporting it and providing the necessary impetus to ensure effective arrangements for the host Conference and attendance and contribution to those events taking place at the other Towns. Whilst the Twinning Societies will wish to have an input to these arrangements, it is clear that the process must be Council lead.

5.3 At this stage, the Committee is recommended to:-

(i) consider and support in principle the objective of a programme of Partnership Conferences around the four Towns of Bruhl/Sceaux/Royal Leamington Spa and Kunice;

(ii) Recommend the Council that subject to consideration of a financial appraisal to support the Council's participation in the Partnership Conference proposal, appropriate funding is set aside during 2013 and 2014 as a contribution to the project costs.

## APPENDIX 1

### PROPOSED CONFERENCES 2013-2014

Date	Towns Participating	Location
<b>2013</b>		
<b>7<sup>TH</sup> – 11<sup>TH</sup> February</b>	Bruhl, Sceaux, Kunice, Leamington Spa	Bruhl
<b>23-27<sup>th</sup> May</b>	Bruhl, Sceaux	Sceaux
<b>23<sup>rd</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> August</b>	Bruhl, Kunice	Kunice
<b>2-7 October</b>	Bruhl, Leamington Spa, Kunice, Sceaux	Bruhl
<b>2014</b>		
<b>28<sup>th</sup> February – 4<sup>th</sup> March</b>	Bruhl, Sceaux, Leamington Spa, Kunice	Bruhl
<b>5<sup>th</sup> -9<sup>th</sup> June</b>	Bruhl, Sceaux, Leamington Spa, Kunice	Bruhl
<b>4<sup>th</sup> -8<sup>th</sup> September</b>	Bruhl, Leamington Spa,	Leamington Spa
<b>28<sup>th</sup> -1<sup>st</sup> December</b>	Kunice, Bruhl	Bruhl

