

TWINNING ADVISORY GROUP

MINUTES OF A MEETING of the Twinning Advisory Group held on Wednesday 4 July 2012 at 11am in Executive Meeting Room, The Guildhall, Portsmouth.

(NB These minutes should be read in conjunction with the agenda and reports for the meeting.)

Present

Councillors Hugh Mason (Chair)
Lynne Stagg
Terry Hall

Representatives of the twinning committees

Rev. David Stephen Butler (Caen & Duisburg Committee Member)
Honorary Alderman Robin Sparshatt (Caen Committee Chair)
Alex Bentley (Haifa Committee Chair)

Also in attendance

Peter Smith-Parkyn (Local Democracy Assistant)

13 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from the Lord Mayor Councillor Frank Jonas, Councillor Steve Wemyss, Councillor Lee Mason and Councillor Peter Eddis.

14 Declaration of Members' Interests

No interests were declared.

15 Minutes of the meeting held on 21 March 2012

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Twinning Advisory Group meeting held on 21 March 2012 be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

16 Communications from the Chair

Councillor Hugh Mason reported that Portsmouth's Education department has been approached by Professor Richardson MBE on behalf of PingXiang, Jiangxi Province, China. Proposing long term friendship and cooperation specifically links between schools. It is further proposed that a delegation from PingXiang to visit Portsmouth schools and asking whether the Lord Mayor could host a reception in September. Whilst the general feeling was one of optimism reservations were expressed over the request to formally authorise their visa to the UK and it was felt that would not be possible.

Councillor Mason continued and reported further that Portsmouth has been approached with regard to a potential new link with a city in the Netherlands, by Mr Banks a member of the Anglo-Dutch society. The group discussed this and found it difficult to identify which Dutch city is most likely to have a natural link with Portsmouth. The group stated that any new link needed to identify clear benefits, being mindful of the limited funding and that our focus is mainly on maintaining our current links. It was agreed that Mr Banks is informed of Portsmouth's situation, seeking more information should he wish to pursue this further, but otherwise a cautious approach should be taken.

17 Sister City Links update

Portsmouth New Hampshire, USA

Councillor Lynne Stagg reported on her visit to Portsmouth, New Hampshire, USA. Councillor Stagg explained that met with Mayor Spears and other members of their council and also had the opportunity to meet with a senator and state senator. While there, it was expressed by Mayor Spears how proud they were with the link with Britain and gave a proclamation of friendship at their council meeting. Councillor Stagg relayed how impressed she was with the city, especially with their preservation of old buildings from the 1920s. During her visit, Councillor Stagg wore her travelling Deputy Lord Mayor's badge and highlighted differences between our cultures, with regard to robes and gold chain of the Lord Mayor, which was reported on the front page of their press. Councillor Stagg also passed on gifts from Portsmouth, provided by Stephen Baily, of 9 Charles Dickens mugs and pins and also books by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle along with the latest copy of our Flagship magazine. Mayor Spears kindly passed on to Councillor Stagg gifts to the UK of a book, about their city, a commemorative coin and a wall hanging for the Lord Mayor's Office.

Maizuru, Japan

Councillor informed the group that the Portsmouth had received a request from Maizuru, on behalf of their international brick museum. They are seeking more British made fire-bricks, of which they have two of. Fire bricks were mainly used for ballast in old colonial ships.

Sydney (City of), Australia

Councillor Mason reported that a request has been received, to look into the possibility of celebrating the departure of the first fleet from Portsmouth to Australia.

RESOLVED that

- (1) A thank you card be sent to Mayor Spears, for the gifts from Portsmouth New Hampshire, USA.**

18 Updates from the Twinning Representatives and grant proposals

The group received the all minutes from the active twinning committees of their meetings, since the last meeting of the Twinning Advisory Group.

Caen Committee

Honorary Alderman Robin Sparshatt reported that the Caen Committee is moving along quite well since its creation and first meeting in November 2011. Since then the committee has responded to a number of different activities. The first being Portsmouth's participation in Caen's Courants de la Liberté race on Sunday 10 June 2012. A written report showcased the four runners from Portsmouth City Council who took place in this race, all of which thoroughly enjoyed their experience in Caen. Thanks were given to Brittany Ferries for complimentary travel and Caen City Council for arranging complimentary entry into the race and their warm hospitality. Whilst this was good news, Honorary Alderman Sparshatt reported that a number of staff were discouraged by the French law requirement to have a doctor's certificate, not less than one year old in order to participate in any sporting event. Particularly as it was reported that some staff members were quoted from their GP a range of charges between £15 and £50 for this. It is hoped that something may be arranged for next year to address this and that a Caen sub committee were looking into possible options.

Honorary Alderman Sparshatt continued by reporting further on the written report on the success of Portsmouth's D-Day Commemoration service. Where the Caen Committee invited and hosted one of Caen's Deputy Mayors, Mr Pascal Blanchetier and two veterans of the second world war. Honorary Alderman Sparshatt informed the group that the whole day had been received very well by the Deputy Mayor and the veterans. Special thanks were expressed to the Royal British Legion, who helped by being excellent hosts to our visitors. Reverend David Stephen Butler reported that the Royal British Legion were very keen to continue and be part of any future visits, which was welcomed. Reverend David Stephen Butler volunteered to continue to act as liaison between Portsmouth City Council's links and the Royal British Legion.

Honorary Alderman Sparshatt moved on to new business by the Caen Committee and presented two grant bids for consideration. The first bid of £500 to support Portsmouth's participation in competing against a running team from Caen in Portsmouth's Great South Run in October 2012. The purpose the grant would be to cover costs hosting our guests and to provide Portsmouth team tee-shirts. The second bid of £600 is to support the reciprocal summer job opportunity for a young person to work in Portsmouth for August. Both bids were considered and were given the approval of the group.

Councillor Stagg reported about the group of young people which each visit Portsmouth's cenotaph to commemorate the deaths of a group of three French Canadian students. Disappointment was expressed that the City Council was not more involved? Reverend David Stephen Butler agreed to pass on all the relevant information to the Lord Mayor's Office and Peter Smith-Parkyn so that something can be arranged for future visits. Mr Bentley asked would it be possible for the Lord Mayor's Office could inform the Leader of the Council and relevant members of such events, to ensure participation, which was approved of by the group. It was further suggested whether accommodation and transport could be provided. It was asked whether a list of members of staff and Councillors would willing to host and

provide accommodation. It was agreed that should be looked into as a possible way of reducing costs of hosting international visitors.

Haifa Committee

Mr Alex Bentley reported on the written report submitted on the successful visit by a Haifa Councillor and their Head of Haifa's budget department officer at Portsmouth's Mayor-making. Whilst the Mayor-making and business meetings of their visit were successful, Mr Bentley reported that the accommodation arrangements were unsatisfactory. He explained told the group of a number of examples which demonstrated the poor service they received. It was unknown why the hotels that were booked were different and was strongly suggested and agreed that every effort should be made to ensure that in the future that a preferred hotel is booked for all our international guests. It was further agreed that a letter should be sent to their hotel expressing our disappointment, copying in the Head of Culture Services, for his information and consideration in the future.

Mr Alex Bentley further reported that in contrast with the accommodation, restaurants used by the Haifa delegation were fantastic. It was proposed and agreed that letters should sent to these restaurants thanking them outstanding service and hospitality.

Mr Alex Bentley informed the group of the work the Haifa Committee are planning, following up on previous meetings with the Leader of the Council, the Lord Mayor, businesses and educational organisations. Mr Alex Bentley explained further, identifying their hope to facilitate the following;

- For the Lord Mayor to head a delegation to Haifa, in October this year, including business representatives and;
- To send to put on an exhibition in Haifa around the works of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, to be sent electronically and reproduced by Tiltan college and;
- To further develop the links between Highbury College and the University of Portsmouth and create new links between schools

Mr Alex Bentley concluded with expressing his pleasure that the Haifa Committee has new interested members who were appointed by the Council.

Duisburg Committee

There was nothing to report from the Duisburg Committee. The group ask if Rev. David Stephen Butler could report back to the Duisburg Committee on the positive progress of the Caen and Haifa Committees.

RESOLVED that

- (1) it be proposed to Resources portfolio, that a grant of £600 to Caen Committee to support the summer job placement in Portsmouth (grant for accommodation – a reciprocal arrangement) and;**
- (2) it be proposed to Resources portfolio, that a grant of £500 to Caen Committee to support the Caen v Portsmouth participation in the Great South Run 2012 and;**

- (3) members of Council staff and Councillors be canvassed to identify those willing to provide accommodation for Portsmouth's international visitors;**
- (4) a letter be sent to the hotel that was used for the Haifa delegation's visit for Mayor-making, expressing their dissatisfaction and the Head of Culture Services be copied in and;**
- (5) a letter be sent to the restaurants used by the Haifa delegation's visit, thanking them for their outstanding service and hospitality**

19 Date of the Next Meeting

The group agreed the date of the next meeting to be held on Wednesday 3 October 2012 at 11am.

The meeting concluded at 12:03pm.

Chair

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