



REPORT BACK ON CONFERENCE/SEMINAR

REPORT TO: Scrutiny Coordination Committee

REPORT OF: The Lord Mayor, Councillor John Gazey

TITLE: Ostrava does not forget...
60th Anniversary of the liberation of the City of Ostrava

DATE: 28th April - 1st May, 2005

VENUE: City of Ostrava, Czech Republic

1 Recommendation

- 1.1 The Scrutiny Coordination Committee is recommended to note the report on the Lord Mayor's civic visit to Ostrava and the outcomes of the visit.

2 Background

- 2.1 Coventry has been twinned with the city of Ostrava since 1959, which is located close to the Czech Republic's borders with Poland and Slovakia in the North Moravia Silesia region. With a population of approximately 330 000 it is the country's third city. The city is at the heart of an industrial and residential conurbation, with more than 1 million people living in a 50km radius of the city.
- 2.2 The series of commemorative events were held to mark the 60th Anniversary of the liberation of the city of Ostrava. The events included a simulation of a WWII tank battle as well as a Memorial Service in the city park.
- 2.3 Other cities represented at the event were: Dresden, Germany, Volgograd, Russia and Miskolc, Hungary. The visit gave the Council the opportunity to investigate any potential co-operation between Coventry and Ostrava or the other delegates attending, in line with the International Strategy.

3 Cost of attending

- 3.1 The Lord Mayor's flights and insurance were financed by the Lord Mayor's hospitality budget:

Return flights Birmingham to Ostrava via Prague: £234.20
City Council's Travel Insurance: £ 16.34
Total: £250.54

Costs for Philip McGrahan, the International Assistant to support him were financed by the International Budget:

Return flights Birmingham to Ostrava via Prague: £234.20
Expenses: £3.73

City Council's Travel Insurance: £16.34

Parking at Airport: £24

Total £278.27

The costs of accommodation and meals were covered by the City of Ostrava.

4 Benefits

- 4.1 The benefits of the Lord Mayor attending the conference were; to represent the City of Coventry at the commemorative events and to promote Coventry's international links and partnerships to our twin city; to share experience in the field of international cooperation and to explore the potential for future collaboration with Ostrava and the other delegates.
- 4.2 The link with Ostrava dates back to 1959. The city is proud to have a link with Coventry, which has been demonstrated, by this invitation to the Lord Mayor as well as the attendance of Myles Mackie, Manager Research and Strategy, Regeneration Services at an economic development conference in 2004. In undertaking the short international visit the Lord Mayor is able to demonstrate the esteem that Coventry has for the City of Ostrava and to maintain personal contact with the leaders of Ostrava City Council, thus supporting the link for future years.
- 4.3 A review of the status of Coventry's twin city links is currently taking place and the visit enabled Philip McGrahan to assess Ostrava's ability and enthusiasm to work with Coventry as a partner on European projects. The initial information from this visit will be used to inform the review of twin city links.
- 4.4 A visit of forty members of the Ostrava City Assembly has been arranged for the 19th until the 21st May, which will discuss regeneration and brown field redevelopment in Coventry. The outcome of this visit may pave the way for future co-operation.
- 4.5 Ostrava is currently finalising the translation of its own international strategy, which will be forwarded onto the International Officers in Coventry once complete. Such a document will provide Coventry City Council with the necessary information to explore possible areas of co-operation.
- 4.6 As a new (and relatively poor) member of the European Union the Czech Republic will now be eligible to receive structural funds such as the ERDF and ESF to support economic and social development. Ostrava expressed interest in learning from the experience of Coventry and the West Midlands in accessing and using such funds. Coventry City Council has considerable experience, which could be shared, and other partners such as AWM and GOWM could also advise. The long-term benefit for Coventry will be that once Ostrava has built up more experience in this area it could be a useful partner for Coventry in accessing trans-national European funds.

List of background papers

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Papers open to public inspection

Description of paper:

Location