



Coventry City Council

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Public report

REPORT BACK ON CONFERENCE/SEMINAR

REPORT TO: Scrutiny Coordination Committee

20th July, 2005

REPORT OF: Lord Mayor, Cllr Ram Lakha

TITLE: International City Forum "Cities of the Future and Gender Equality"

DATE: 17th and 18th June 2004

VENUE: Kiel, Germany

1 Recommendation

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

2 Background

2.1 The purpose of the visit to Kiel was to raise the profile of the City Council and the City of Coventry at an international level in the field of gender equality by attending the International City Forum, which was part of a programme of events for Kiel Week.

2.2 Each year the City Council is invited to attend Kiel Week, the largest sailing/sports event in Europe. This year there were over 1,000 events scheduled with over 3.5 million visitors estimated to visit the area from all over the world. This included over 70 nationalities participating throughout the week.

2.3 In addition to the sailing and sporting activities Kiel also plays host to numerous other events including the International City Forum. The Forum invites twin cities of Kiel to participate in an exchange of information on a topical subject. This year the topic was Gender Equality.

2.4 The Lord Mayor, Cllr Lakha, was accompanied on the visit by Surindar Nagra, Corporate Policy Coordinator, Chief Executive's Directorate and Professor Karen Ross who presented the Coventry contribution at the International City Forum.

3 Cost of attending

3.1 Costs for attending were as follows:

Return flights Birmingham to Kiel	£584.00
City Council's Travel Insurance	£ 50.00
Total	£634.00

3.2 The above expenses were covered by the International Policy Budget. The costs of accommodation and meals were covered by the City of Kiel. Coventry University covered the costs of Professor Ross and contributed to the costs of two of her PhD students, Kutoma Wakunuma and Geeta Sarcar who took part in associated activities at Kiel University of Applied Science.

4 Benefits

4.1 The International City Forum was attended by practitioners in the field of gender equality from approximately 15 cities throughout Europe. The conference opened with keynote speeches on the issue of gender equality. The conference then allowed time for discussion on the experience of each city.

4.2 The conference focused on the fact that women account for half of the population and it was important that the gender perspective was included in all areas of activity in public life. The conference was set against the changes in socio-demographics, which influenced all activity in city councils'.

4.3 The Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) included the EU's commitment to gender mainstreaming at every level down to local government. The conference explored what difference this had made in political decision- making, planning etc. The clear message that came out of the conference was that the consequences of any decisions made should be measured for impact on both men and women at every level, especially when women still remain the main carers for children and older people.

4.4 From the presentations that were made at the conference it was clear that different countries had different issue to deal with, but what was common to many cities was the financial difficulties that they were facing particularly where companies were moving out and putting pressure on the economy. Therefore there was a need to ensure that the working and social environment encourages women to participate in and contribute to the economy. It was agreed that cities would need to promote gender mainstreaming within the context of economic progress.

4.5 The delegation from Norway shared an interesting concept that if companies wanted to compete on the stock exchange they were required to have at least 40% female employees.

4.6 Other issues that raised included violence and abuse of young women by young men which was an emerging issue for one of the cities. However Coventry were ahead of the game in recognition and development of gender issues.

4.7 The presentation given by Professor Karen Ross, Coventry University focused on celebrating the achievements of women. The main focus of the presentation was a film of local women celebrating women's achievements during Coventry Women's Festival.

4.8 Both Councillor Ram Lakha and Professor Ross received good publicity in the local newspaper, which will enhance the profile of the City.

4.9 Wolfgang Kerber, Head Teacher from the Berufliche Schule (Vocational College) was keen to establish links with Coventry's Colleges to explore the opportunity for colleges to exchange visits by apprentices. This information has been passed to the City College and Henley College for consideration. The colleges have been asked to follow up this proposal directly.

4.10 Dr. Lisa Homrich, Senior Teacher from the German-British Society expressed an interest in inviting businesses in Coventry to take part in the celebrations to mark the 60 years of Twinning with Kiel in 2007. This request has been passed onto the Coventry Chamber of Commerce.

List of background papers

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Papers open to public inspection

Description of paper:	Location
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