



Coventry City Council

# 4.2

## Public report

### **REPORT BACK ON CONFERENCE/SEMINAR**

**REPORT TO:** Scrutiny Co-ordination

**DATE:** 5<sup>th</sup> July, 2006

**REPORT OF:** The Lord Mayor, Councillor Ram Lakha

**TITLE:** 800<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the City of Dresden

**DATE:** 30<sup>th</sup> March – 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2006

**VENUE:** City of Dresden, Germany

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#### **1 Recommendation**

Scrutiny Co-ordination is recommended to note the report on the Lord Mayor's civic visit to Dresden and the outcomes of the visit.

#### **2 Background**

The City of Coventry has 26 twin cities throughout the world. Most of these links were formed in the spirit of peace and reconciliation after the end of World War II. The link with Dresden was formalised in 1959. The common fate of the two cities during World War II and their many years of efforts for reconciliation and understanding among people resulted in the twinning of the two cities. Dresden is the capital of the eastern German state of Saxony and is located close to Germany's borders with the Czech Republic and Poland.

2006 marks the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first record of the city of Dresden and the occasion will be celebrated throughout the year in commemoration of the occasion. The Lord Mayor was invited to attend one of the highlights of the year – the ceremonial act to commemorate the first mentioning of Dresden to coincide with the date of the first record. The visit also included an ecumenical service at the newly reconstructed Frauenkirche (Church of Our Lady) – which had been destroyed during the Second World War.

Other cities represented at the event were: Wroclaw, Poland, Columbus, Ohio, USA, Florence, Italy, Gostyn, Poland, Hamburg, Germany, Ostrava, Czech Republic, Rotterdam, Netherlands, Salzburg, Austria, Skopje, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, St. Petersburg, Russia, Strasbourg, France, Toulouse, France and Brazzaville, Democratic Republic of Congo.

Accompanying the Lord Mayor allowed the International Assistant to have a brief meeting with the Head of International Relations and International Relations Officers from the city of Dresden and other participating cities to discuss areas with potential for cooperation.

### 3 Cost of attending

The costs for attending were as follows:

Return flights Birmingham to Dresden via Munich:	£ 522.18
Expenses:	£ 26.51
City Council's Travel Insurance:	£ 29.70
Parking at Airport:	£ 24.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 602.39</b>

The flights, expenses and insurance were covered by the Lord Mayor's Hospitality budget while the parking was paid by the International budget. The costs of accommodation and meals were covered by the City of Dresden.

### 4 Benefits

Local authority international links and partnerships provide a number of benefits including improved service delivery and problem solving through learning from the best practice of others. Sharing information and experiences with counterparts overseas and staff exchanges can be an effective way of delivering technical assistance and can be more sustainable than one off projects. Local authorities can compare approaches and let members and officers learn from each other over time. Overseas partnerships and twinning links increase awareness of European and international issues and can improve local authorities' understanding of our counterparts in the rest of the world. In terms of EU funding, twinning links provide a good source of reliable partners for trans-national funding projects and short visits are often the quickest and most effective way of keeping up to date with developments in each other's cities and maintaining an active link.

The Lord Mayor's attendance at the events was to represent the City of Coventry; 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 Dresden and the other delegates.

The link with Dresden dates back to 1959 and was Dresden's first twin city relationship. The city is proud to have a link with Coventry, which has been demonstrated, by this invitation to the Lord Mayor as well as by close co-operation with Coventry Cathedral and the Herbert on cultural projects.

In undertaking the short international visit the Lord Mayor was able to demonstrate the esteem that Coventry has for the City of Dresden and to maintain personal contact with the leaders of Dresden City Council, thus supporting the link for future years.

A review of the status of Coventry's twin city links is currently taking place and the visit enabled Phil McGrahan to assess Dresden'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.

The visit also provided the opportunity for Phil McGrahan to discuss Coventry's participation at a variety of events in Dresden later in the year. Dresden are also interested in redeveloping or constructing a new stadium for their local football team and are interested in

organising a study visit to Coventry in the near future to discuss how the arena was developed.

As a former communist country the former east Germany will continue to receive structural funds such as the ERDF and ESF from the EU to support economic and social development. The city may be interested 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.

Dresden has also expressed an interest in working with Coventry on trans-national projects such as EQUAL which would allow both cities access to trans-national European funds. The international offices in both cities will remain in contact with a view to identifying joint initiatives, which could be eligible for trans-national European Funding programmes.

List of background papers

Proper Officer: Roger Hughes  
Head of Corporate Policy

Author: Phil McGrahan,  
International Assistant

Tel Number: 3060

(Any enquiries should be directed to the above)

Other contributors: The Lord Mayor, Councillor Ram Lakha  
Papers open to public inspection

<b>Description of paper:</b>	<b>Location</b>
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