

REPORT BACK ON CONFERENCE/SEMINAR

REPORT TO: Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee 20th September 2006
REPORT OF: Cllr Ken Taylor, Leader of the Council
TITLE: 6th General Assembly of the Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities
DATE: 30 June to 1 July 2006
VENUE: Figueira da Foz, Portugal

1 Recommendation

1.1 Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee is recommended to note the contents of this report.

2 Background

2.1 The Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities (CAAC) is a city network of some 40 cities from Ireland, UK, Spain, Portugal and France which was founded in 2000. CAAC has benefited from funding through the European Union (EU) Regional Programme Interegg aimed at improving co-operation and promoting economic development between certain EU regions – in this case the North West periphery of the EU known as the Atlantic Arc. As a respected European city network, CAAC is regularly consulted by the EU on urban and regional policy. Coventry, like the rest of the West Midlands region, is included within the EU Atlantic Arc area and gains international profile as a member of the network.

2.2 As a new member to CAAC, the Leader of the City Council gave a short presentation to the General Assembly which included a promotional film about Coventry and set out what Coventry aims and objectives were in working in Europe. Coventry was also asked to consider becoming the Lead City for Urban and Port Development - one of 5 new working groups to be set up by the CAAC at the General Assembly to take the network forward over the next two years. The areas this working group will cover include: urban centres, marketing, sustainability, strategic planning, ports city regeneration and commercial development. The city of Brest will provide support and lead on port issues.

2.3 Each of the working groups will develop work programmes that will promote the interests of the CAAC cities and respond to the opportunities from the new EU funding programmes for 2001-2013. This will include the development of trans-national regeneration projects that will look to access both the specific regional funding available to the CAAC and other EU programmes and will give Coventry the opportunity to put forward areas of activity that we are particularly interested in for development as projects for partnership working. As a lead City, Coventry has now become a member of the

CAAC Executive Bureau and will be more actively involved in both setting the agenda of the Working Group and in setting the general direction for the CAAC.

- 2.4 Other speakers at the General Assembly included Mr Joao Ferrao, the Portuguese secretary of State for Spatial Planning and Cities, influential MEPs and other members of CAAC. Areas of discussion included Cohesion Policy and Cities; putting words into practice in delivering regeneration and the need to engage citizens. Of particular interest was a presentation by Hugh Baker from the Regional Policy Directorate-General of the European Commission who spoke about the new Regional Funds and the forthcoming guidance and regulatory framework. This was to contain more opportunities for cities and urban areas than originally feared and developing local and transnational partnerships would be vital to the success if the strategy.
- 2.5 The CAAC Assembly considered the work that has been undertaken its thematic commissions including: economic development, culture and heritage, accessibility and urban development and these were wound up. The membership of the future CAAC's working groups was agreed by the General Assembly and Coventry was appointed lead city for Urban and Port Development.
- 2.6 The Leader and Policy and Performance Manager also took part in a tour of the port and city of Figueira da Foz including a visit to some EU funded business incubator units and a newly constructed Arts Centre/Civic Hall.

3 Cost of attending

The total cost of attending the CAAC Assembly, including flights, transfers, insurance, accommodation and expenses was £606.

4 Benefits

- 4.1 Benefits to the City Council from attendance at the conference include the promotion of the city to leaders of other European cities and within the EU; the development of a better understanding of new EU funding opportunities and access to them through the membership of a trans-national city network designed to access these opportunities.
- 4.2 As the lead city for developing activity on urban regeneration for CAAC, Coventry will have direct influence on the type of projects that will be developed and put forward for funding. Working closely with city partners from Ireland, Spain, France and Portugal on developing work programmes will also give us the type of partners that are required to access a range of EU funds that require trans-national partners.
- 4.3 The Leader and Policy and Performance Manager found discussions (both at the Assembly and outside the conference) with partner cities about the tensions they had in their relations between neighbouring cities, regional bodies and their national governments very interesting and have identified this as a potential area for partnership working in the future.

5. Date of Cabinet Approval

13th June 2006 (Minute 16 (4) refers)

List of background papers

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Papers open to public inspection

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CAAC Assembly Agenda, papers and minutes	CH38

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