



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

**REPORT TO:** Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee  
**REPORT OF:** The Lord Mayor, Councillor Shabbir Ahmed  
**TITLE:** Visit to Rawalpindi, Pakistan 2006  
**DATE:** 19<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> November 2006  
**VENUE:** Rawalpindi and Muzzafarabad Pakistan

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### **1. Recommendation**

The Scrutiny Coordination Committee is recommended to note the report on, and the positive outcomes of the Lord Mayor's visit to Pakistan between the 19<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> November 2006.

### **2. Background**

Pakistan has very strong historical and cultural links with the UK. Coventry has approximately 3000 people that are of Pakistani origin, or of Pakistani descent, and have familial links within Pakistan's Rawalpindi area.

Following communication with the West Midlands Police, the Lord Mayor decided to lead a delegation to Pakistan in November to focus on developing links with the Rawalpindi City District and Rawalpindi Police Force specifically looking at community safety. Whilst in Pakistan some of the party, with colleagues from Action Aid charity, visited a site affected by the 2005 Earthquake.

The visit provided an opportunity to build better links between Coventry and the city of Rawalpindi as well as the West Midlands Police and the Rawalpindi Police. The full benefits of this collaboration are detailed below.

The Lord Mayor, the Lady Mayoress, Councillor Matchet and Tariq Ditta visited the earthquake region of Pakistan – Muzzafarabad to see for themselves the reconstruction taking place following the earthquake. It gave the Lord Mayor an opportunity to let people in Pakistani Kashmir know that Coventry citizens will continue with their fund raising efforts to support them.

The University of Warwick are expanding and strengthening their links with Universities in Pakistan. They were keen to take advantage of the Lord Mayor's visit to arrange a reception with potential partners.

### **3. Cost of attending**

The total costs for the Lord Mayor, the Lady Mayoress, Councillors O'Neill and Matchet and Tariq Ditta (City Services) are as follows:

Flights	£4330 (Please note the mitigation of £1000 below)
Insurance	£224.01
Accommodation	£1549.52
Expenses	£149.25
Total	£6252.78

The Lord Mayor's Hospitality Budget covered the costs for the Lord Mayor, while the International Budget paid the costs for Cllr Matchet and Tariq Ditta. The West Midlands Police Authority funded all costs for Cllr O'Neill, while the Lady Mayoress' costs were financed privately.

It should be noted that a £1,000 donation was given by Heil UK Ltd, who are the City Council's approved supplier of refuse collection vehicles, towards the travel costs of the Lady Mayoress' cost (£500) and Cllr Andy Matchett (£500).

#### **4. Benefits**

This important "pathfinder" visit contributes to better understanding and promotes dialogue with Pakistani Local Government, Police and Non-Governmental organisations. The visit was particularly relevant given the current global geo-political issues, e.g. alleged terrorism involving Pakistan and the on-going dispute with India on Kashmir which might affect Coventry's community cohesion.

#### **ActionAid**

The party was able to see the work of one of the Lord Mayor's selected charities Action Aid and how they are supporting small communities in the largely inaccessible rural areas of earthquake-hit Muzzafarabad. Valuable insight was gained on how charitable donations could be used and the likely impact on the local population, for example they need urgent assistance to build a small primary school, which is currently built of tin sheets! Another ambition of Action-aid is to further develop the existing health centre which houses a women's clothing micro co-operative. The delegation learnt the school and health centre would be receptive to receiving resources, such as books and videos that our library service and other services might be discarding. It was also apparent that any charitable funds raised by the Lord Mayor need to be carefully managed and ring-fenced so that the majority of the funds result in tangible improvements in community facilities.

#### **Police**

The delegation discussed with the police authorities and the National Police Training College in Rawalpindi region how they deal with community disturbances and their operational involvement with local Government. The Rawalpindi police have an extensive voluntary network of police support officers (Mohafiz force) that help to minimize crime and the fear of crime. They expressed a strong interest in the role of our street wardens and the linkage with other statutory agencies through Neighbourhood Management and the Active Intelligence Mapping group meetings. The Deputy Leader, in his capacity as a Member of the West Midlands Police Authority, asked various questions about police operational issues and some of the knowledge

gained might be helpful in our on-going work with the police in Coventry, e.g. Pakistani police officers can only be recruited in those areas where they are domiciled.

### **Local Authority**

There is great potential to develop very strong links with Rawalpindi Local Government in providing advice on the development of their infrastructure and operations. Rawalpindi is focussing on improving literacy, health and infrastructure - which are similar to the City Council's priorities. For example Rawalpindi are submitting an US\$ 86m bid to the World Bank to setup a recycling and sewage treatment facility. Obviously the City Council has experience of operating the Waste-to-Energy plant and Rawalpindi could use our advice and in exchange we get intelligence on the proposed plant to use in our operations.

The Foreign & Commonwealth Office and Department for International Development have recently visited Pakistan to investigate interest in developing partnerships between UK and Pakistani authorities specifically in the area of community safety. The fund would help finance collaborative projects between Coventry and Rawalpindi, so the link with Rawalpindi City District will stand Coventry in good stead for accessing the appropriate funding when it becomes available – this is anticipated late 2007 / early 2008.

It was interesting hear about their community involvement through their Citizen Community Boards (CCB) which covers a geographic area that could be considered equivalent to a Ward. 25 local residents (not councillors) sit on the Community Board with four seats ring-fenced for women. The CCB are given money for small-scale practical projects and are required to deliver them. Rawalpindi local Government provides monitoring, probity role and technical assistance where necessary. The CCB budget is rolled forward into the following year if the budget is not used. Perhaps this approach could be considered in future development for our Ward Fora meetings.

We also learnt that the elected leader (called a Nazim) of the Council meets 3-400 of the electorate on a daily basis to listen to their issues. Indeed when we arrived for our meeting with him I observed that there were approximately 45 people in the office's courtyard waiting to see him.

### **University Link**

The delegation also attended a promotional evening held by the University of Warwick to attract participants. In attendance were representatives from the Pakistan National University of Science and Technology (NUST) and it was apparent that they are eager to develop academic links with the UK. I also believe that there is a great opportunity to attract students to the University of Coventry and other tertiary educational services.

Finally as Pakistan is a developing country, their economy is eager to develop their industries and I have no doubt that there are potential import and export opportunities for the Coventry business community to exploit.

List of background papers

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Papers open to public inspection

**Description of paper:**                      **Location**

**Approved by Cabinet on:**  
**Report: 12 (a)**