



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

**REPORT TO:** Scrutiny Coordination Committee

**REPORT OF:** Lord Mayor, Cllr Dave Batten

**TITLE:** Civic Visit to Belgrade, Serbia on 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Twinning Links

**DATE:** 2<sup>nd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> October 2007

**VENUE:** Belgrade, Serbia

---

### **1 Recommendation**

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

### **2 Background**

- 2.1 2007 marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the friendship links between Coventry and the City of Belgrade.
- 2.2 The purpose of the visit was for the Lord Mayor, Councillor Dave Batten, to attend and take part in a programme of events hosted by Belgrade City Council to mark this historic occasion.
- 2.3 The Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress' attendance provided an opportunity to raise the profile and represent the City Council and Coventry at a wider European level.
- 2.4 As part of ongoing exchanges between the Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce and the Belgrade Chamber of Commerce, the visit provided an opportunity to continue discussions on possible economic benefits and trade links between both cities. Alan Durham, Director of International Trade from Coventry's Chamber of Commerce travelled with the Lord Mayor to maximise the potential.
- 2.5 A group of 21 children from Coventry's Performing Arts Service took part in the 32<sup>nd</sup> Joy of Europe International Children's Festival representing Great Britain.
- 2.6 Jane Barlow, Civic Business Manager (CBM), who now has responsibility for international twinning as part of the Council's recent restructure, accompanied the Lord Mayor on the visit.

### 3 Cost of attending

3.1 The costs for attending were as follows:

Flights Heathrow to Belgrade for LM and CBM:	£ 288.00
City Council's Travel Insurance:	£ 89.10
Airport Refreshments:	£ 12.10
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 389.20</b>

3.2 Costs were covered between the Lord Mayor's Hospitality Budget and the Lord Mayor's Office international budget. The costs of accommodation and meals were funded by the City of Belgrade.

### 4 Benefits

4.1 To represent Coventry over a two-day business and cultural visit that coincided with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the twinning relationship with Belgrade.

4.2 There was extensive media coverage of the visit with the Lord Mayor giving interviews to three daily newspapers, a live press conference with the Deputy Mayor of Belgrade and two live television interviews with TV92 (Belgrade's equivalent to GMTV) and RTS, a Serbian news channel. The coverage provided excellent opportunities to highlight the links between the two cities, to raise awareness of the Belgrade Theatre and Belgrade Plaza and increase the profile of Coventry generally.



4.3 Following-on from the Deputy Mayor of Belgrade, Mrs Radmila Hrustanović, visit to Coventry in September, a significant follow-up meeting took place with Councillors of Belgrade, the President of The Belgrade Chamber, Deputy Ambassador of GB in Serbia and Director of Belgrade Tourist Board. A televised press conference took place with a number of press organisations from Belgrade and Serbia in attendance to understand and report on the background to the link.



4.4 A joint meeting was held with the British Embassy in Serbia and Belgrade Chamber of Commerce to continue discussions on trade and business opportunities for both cities, to learn and raise awareness of each others economic and statistical information via face-to-face communication and to recognise the prosperity and opportunity for mutual economic benefit that warrant further discussion in the future.



4.5 Throughout the Joy of Europe Festival 2007, Coventry children from the Performing Arts Service represented Great Britain. Children from 22 other countries also took part in the Festival, culminating in a Gala Concert on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> October 2007. The Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress met the children on a couple of occasions and the group were true ambassadors for Coventry, and were delighted that the Lord Mayor was able to see their performances.



4.6 Shortly before the Lord Mayor's arrival in Belgrade, on Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> September 2007, the Mayor of Belgrade sadly died following illness. The Lord Mayor took the opportunity on behalf of the citizens of Coventry to write a message in the Book of Condolence to the people of Belgrade in their sad loss.



List of background papers	
Proper Officer: Bev Messinger, Director of Customer and Workforce Services	
Author: Jane Barlow, Civic Business Manager	
Tel Number: 024 7683 3047	
(Any enquiries should be directed to the above)	
Other contributors:	
Cllr Dave Batten, Lord Mayor	
Papers open to public inspection	
<b>Description of paper:</b>	<b>Location</b>
Civic Visit to Belgrade Paper	Room 36, Council House