



Coventry City Council

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Public report

REPORT BACK ON CONFERENCE/SEMINAR

REPORT TO: Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee
REPORT OF: Lord Mayor, Councillor Jack Harrison MBE. JP
TITLE: Civic Visit to Belgrade, Serbia
DATE: 2nd – 6th October 2009
VENUE: Belgrade, Serbia

1 Recommendation

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

2 Background

2.1 2007 marked the 50th anniversary of the links between Coventry and the City of Belgrade. This coincided with the official re-opening of the Belgrade Theatre.

2.2 Various activities have taken place during 2009 to strengthen the links:

- Visit by His Excellency Dr Dejan Popovic, Ambassador to Serbia, visited in June for the Belgrade Literal Book Presentation at Central Library. A verbal invitation was extended to the Lord Mayor to visit Belgrade, and this was followed by a formal letter from the Mayor of Belgrade.
- The Lord Mayor attended a Serbian folklore event of music and dance celebration at the Belgrade Theatre.

2.3 The purpose of the visit was for the Lord Mayor to attend and take part in a programme of events hosted by Belgrade City Council.

2.4 The Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress' attendance provided an opportunity to raise the profile and represent the City Council and Coventry at a wide ~European level.

2.5 A group of 23 children from Caludon Castle School took part in the 34th Joy of Europe International Children's Festival representing Great Britain.

2.6 Jane Barlow, Civic Business Manager (CBM) 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 Lord Mayor and CBM	498.40
Contribution towards Translator Costs	100.00
Meals and one night accommodation	185.26
Total	£783.66

3.2 Costs were covered between the Lord Mayor's Hospitality Budget and the Lord Mayor's office international budget. The costs of accommodation (apart for one night) were funded by the City of Belgrade.

3.3 The flight costs of the Lady Mayoress were funded personally by the Lord Mayor.

4. Benefits

There were four main areas of benefit:

4.1 **Business and Commerce:** In order for Serbia to advance its application to the European Union, Belgrade are very keen to demonstrate its co-operation and business exchanges with other EU countries. The link between Coventry and Belgrade is therefore very important to them. Links between The Belgrade Chamber of Commerce and Coventry's Chamber already exist and are continuing to develop.



4.2 **Education:** A visit to the Faculty of Organisational Sciences part of Belgrade University, brings opportunities for strong connections with both Coventry University and Warwick University. The Lord Mayor agreed to pass on information supplied to them. The Faculty also intends to put the Lord Mayor's DVD (with Serbian subtitles) onto its website.



4.3 **Culture and Arts:** The Children's Cultural Centre in Belgrade is currently raising funds for refurbishment. It is proposed that once complete the main theatre hall will be named 'Coventry' to sit alongside The Belgrade Theatre in Coventry.



4.4 Belgrade Museum expressed an interest to establish a link with the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum. The Lord Mayor agreed to pass on the relevant contact details.

4.5 The Joy of Europe Children's Festival, now in its 34th year, saw pupils from Caludon Castle School take part representing Great Britain. Children from 19 other countries also took part in the Festival, culminating in a Gala Concert. 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 It is worthy to note the Belgrade Theatre are improving their links with theatre groups in Belgrade resulting in Hamish Glen visiting Belgrade in late November 2009. Belgrade Theatre have also agreed to promote the City of Belgrade with tourist information and display of civic gifts in the public areas of the Theatre.

4.7 **Media & PR:** there was extensive media coverage of the Lord Mayor's visit. With the Lord Mayor's 'My Coventry' DVD' having been translated offering Serbian subtitles, this was well received and broadcast in full on Belgrade's equivalent of GMTV – TV92 telephone when interviewing the Lord Mayor.

4.8 Similarly, the Lord Mayor was interviewed and appeared on RTS, a national Serbian new channel during the visit.

List of background papers

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Papers open to public inspection

Description of paper:

International Strategy
Civic Visit to Volgograd File

Location:

West Orchards House
Room 36, Council House