



Report to
Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

6 January 2010

Report of
Councillor Lakha

Title
Report Back on the Work Of Outside Bodies - Coventry Association for International Friendship

1 Purpose of the Report

Annual Report back to Scrutiny Board.

- 1.1 This report sets out details of the work of Coventry Association for International Friendship (C.A.I.F.) over the preceding twelve months and details of attendance by the City Council's representatives.

2 Recommendations

Please note the report and to continue to the appointment of Elected Member

3 Information on Work of Outside Body

I have received a report from the Honorary Secretary of CAIF which I enclose for information. I am tempted to quote the objective of the organisation as it is mentioned in the report.

“Objectives

The Association is working in a variety of ways to advance the cause of international friendship and understanding in Coventry, and to attract other organisations to this aim by liaising with other organisations, citizens of Coventry and other people around the globe by exchanging visits. This objective fits in City Council's own aspirations and policies for Peace and Reconciliation. The theme of Peace Month is pursued actively.”

Membership & Finance – CAIF has its basic membership and the committee is elected by the members. The committee manages the business of the CAIF. City Council provides the financial assistance for its administration mainly through its Civic Office.

- 3.1 Since I was appointed by the Council in May, I attended two committee meetings and one of that I Chaired in the absence of Chair and Deputy Chair. During those meetings two main events were planned in line and as part of the Peace Month objectives. One was Community Concert in St Mary's Guild Hall on November 6th and the other was Pathway to Peace in Afganistan which was held at the Methodist Central Hall on November 20th 2009. Both events were well attended.

4 Benefits to the City Council of the Appointment

4.1 City Council provides financial assistance to CAIF to which it helps City Council for its aspirations and policies for Peace and international friendship. By appointing elected member as a delegate to the committee of CAIF it enhances the support to CAIF for Council's objectives.

5 Attendance Record and Remuneration for the Appointment

5.1 Please see 3.1 above.

5.2 There is no remuneration associated with the appointment.

List of background papers

Proper officer:

Author:
Councillor Ram P Lakha
(Any enquiries should be directed to the above)

Telephone 024 7683 1002

Other contributors:

Papers open to Public Inspection

Description of paper
Schedule of City Council Appointments to outside Bodies

Location CH60

Coventry Association for International Friendship: Report for the year ending 31 March 2009

1 Objectives

The Association has worked in a variety of ways to advance the cause of international friendship and understanding in Coventry, and to attract other organisations to this aim..

A second objective has been to increase contacts between the citizens of Coventry and the citizens its twin and partner towns, especially through focus on its core activity of exchange visits.

Its third objective has been through these activities to support Coventry council's international policies of peace and reconciliation.

Its fourth objective has been to make a significant contribution to Peace Month.

2 Membership & Finance

The city council's grant guarantees the running expenses of the Association, such as postage and printing. Subscriptions also increase our income, collected from the greater part of our membership of seventy. Thirdly, receipts into the Hospitality Fund drawn from social events helped to increase total reserves..

3 Officers and Committee Members

President	The Lord Mayor, Cllr Andy Matchet
Chairman	Cllr John Gazey
Vice-Chair	George Miles and Pru Porretta
Secretary	John Moore
Assistant Secretary	Mary Goodwin
Treasurer	Ben Freeman
Social Secretary	Pat Trickett

Committee:

Diana Dodd
Maureen Porter
Christine Oddy
Linda Hirons
Jennifer Smith

The Nightingales Choir is affiliated to CAIF and is represented by its director, Pat Trickett. Coventry Guides are also affiliated..

4 Incoming visits

Late October 2008 and early November we entertained a group of Dresdeners, who were members of the German-British Society. We took them to the theatre in Birmingham and to Baddesley Clinton, where a CAIF member in her guide role, and in full costume, gave them an absorbing talk and tour.

They met the Lord Mayor, Cllr Matchet, and conveyed to him the civic invitation to visit Dresden - as he did – at the time of the commemoration of the destruction of the city in February 1945.

In March, five people from Volgograd were in Coventry as guests of the city council. CAIF entertained them in a Kenilworth restaurant and in the course of the evening re-invigorated the ties established with the famous city, when CAIF groups visited it twice, a few years ago.

5 Outgoing visits

CAIF's links with Meschede, Coventry's partner town in the Sauerland, western Germany (after which Meschede Way was named), were strengthened when an eleven-member party was hosted there in late September and early October. We joined 20 Bretons, a group from Coventry Rhode Island and a few Poles and Russians. There was excellent hospitality and a real multinational atmosphere of friendship and understanding. There was a large German presence at an ecumenical church service, at which CAIF member Rev Alan Betteridge was one of the ministers.

6 Peace Month 2008

CAIF's main contribution was a Multicultural Concert, held in St Mary's Guildhall. The Innishfall Ceili band; the Tamil Academy of Language & Arts dancers; the Godiva Sisters; the Nightingales; the Mary McHugh Irish child dancers; the Soulful Gospel Choir; and Polish soprano Joanna Kunda – all these put their hearts and souls into the concert and were much appreciated by a full house.

7 Other links.

Every now and again we have requests for assistance from individuals in the towns and cities that we visit. Thus, a student from Kiel came to Coventry to enquire about the origins of the link between the two cities. Peter Warden, an early member of CAIF

and enthusiastic leader of group visits to Kiel in the past, gave him a great deal of help in his researches.

Another low-key event was the printed report of the Coventry Club, Hiroshima. The club always meets to commemorate the anniversary of the great Blitz on Coventry. They sing British songs, and the sympathy and solidarity shown is moving, though their experience of war was more terrible still than Coventry's.

8 General meetings

In November, Ann Farr showed slides and gave a talk about her visit to a peace project in an area of confrontation in Bethlehem in the West bank of Palestine. She conveyed a clear sense of the humanitarian crisis, which is now a focus of new international concern to resolve.

In February we celebrated the 50th anniversary of Coventry-Dresden twinning. Mrs Pat Holmes and Michael Butterfield, former education officer at Coventry Cathedral, were two of a group of young Britons in 1965 who volunteered to help rebuild a damaged hospital in Dresden. Forty-four years on, still living locally, they recalled the episode and commented on a silent film of their work. It has been said that their 1965 visit was one of the most important early steps towards reconciliation.

9 Publicity

The historical sketch of CAIF – the Blue Book – continues to be useful publicity, and a source of information about Coventry to foreign visitors.

.

10 Social activities

June 2008 saw a party at the home of CAIF's tireless social secretary, in memory of Margaret Warman; and there was another one held in August to raise funds to help the Nightingales visit Dresden. .

The Nightingales gave more lively concerts, one of them at the May 2008 Annual General Meeting. They are an independent choir but they make a good contribution towards the morale of CAIF.

Coventry Association For International Friendship: Development Plan, 2009-10

1 CAIF will continue its support for the city council's international policy of peace and reconciliation. CAIF believes that peaceful international relations cannot be taken for granted but have to be fostered, and that Coventry's status at home and abroad is strengthened by the peace initiatives of the city council and Coventry Cathedral.

Note: Exchange visits are CAIF's core activity, but invitations are often issued and confirmed early in the new calendar year, so that the following programme is provisional in part.

2 Outgoing visits

The Nightingales, the young women's choir affiliated to CAIF, will visit Dresden in the last week of April, to sing with German girls. A financial problem arose, following a sharp increase in air fares to Dresden, and the Nightingales needed assistance. Believing that encouragement of youth exchanges is well within its remit, CAIF has donated the equivalent of three airfares.

Warsaw link. At the conclusion of the visit to Coventry by a lecturer from Warsaw University, in February 2009, the Secretary of CAIF and partner were invited to Warsaw. The trip will probably take place in the summer months, hopefully with prospects of exchange visits between the two cities.

Another visit to Dresden is possible in 2009-10, in response to invitations received.

Early discussions are in progress on a visit to Kiel.

3 Incoming visits

A party from partner town Vannes in Brittany will be hosted by CAIF from August 17-24. They are getting to know Coventry quite well and are interested in seeing the refurbished Herbert galleries, as well as the Motor Transport Museum (not for the first time). They will be taken to Cardiff for two nights to further explore their Celtic roots, having explored North Wales with CAIF on two previous visits.

A girls' choir from Dresden will be visiting Coventry at the end of April, immediately after the Nightingales' visit to Dresden. Some CAIF members will assist with the hosting of choir and adults.

Meschede return visit. After a very successful multinational meeting in this Sauerland state of West Germany – a partner town of Coventry CAIF has invited a Meschede group over here in 2010. Dates have not yet been decided, but an enthusiastic response is expected to our invitation.

4 Peace Month

Subject to city council decisions on the holding of Peace Month in 2009, CAIF will seek to hold a public meeting with a national speaker on some such theme as *Global Warming - Threat to World Peace*.

It will also seek to organise another multicultural concert, on similar lines to the one that was very successful in 2008.

5 Public meetings

In addition to the Peace Month event, public meetings on international themes will be held in February and May 2010

6 Meetings with civic visitors

As usual, when asked by the city council, CAIF will help to look after foreign visitors, perhaps by showing them round the city and neighbouring places of interest or entertaining them to an evening meal.

7 Heritage Weekend

CAIF will consider support for this civic initiative with an exhibition on its twin city ties forming part of Coventry's heritage.

8 Social activities

These are still very popular, including coffee mornings, garden parties and evening excursions to opera in Birmingham. They seek to attract new people to the association, and bring existing members closer together.

9 Publicity

Copies of the historical sketch of the association in its so-called Blue Book will be distributed on public occasions and meetings with foreign visitors.

10 Conclusion

CAIF continues to play a worth- while role in stimulating public interest in the city's international policies of peace and reconciliation, in bringing together people of various political persuasions, and in fostering friendship with peoples overseas, especially in our twin towns, and also with ethnic minorities in Coventry.

Cllr John Gazey, Chairman

John Moore, Secretary