

REPORT BACK ON CONFERENCE/SEMINAR

REPORT TO: Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee **3rd November 2010**
REPORT OF: Lord Mayor of the City of Coventry 2009/10
Councillor Jack Harrison MBE. JP
TITLE: Civic Visit to Volgograd and Moscow
DATE: 7th – 15th May 2010
VENUE: Volgograd and Moscow, Russia

Recommendation

- 1.1 The Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee is recommended to endorse the report of the Lord Mayor's civic visit to Volgograd and Moscow and the positive outcomes of the visit.

2. Background

- 2.1 I and the Lady Mayoress were invited to Volgograd by the Mayor of Volgograd to represent the City of Coventry at a number of ceremonial events to commemorate the 65th Anniversary of the day of victory over fascism in World War II. We also attended a number of other events/meetings aimed at strengthening connections between Volgograd and Coventry that were established during our visit to Volgograd in September 2009, to commemorate the 65th Anniversary of our twinning link between the two cities. These connections included a twinning link between a school in Volgograd and a primary school in Coventry, together with other links in the fields of religion, education, business, trade and health.

During a three day stop over in Moscow on our journey home, we held meetings with representatives of the Government of Moscow and the British Embassy in Moscow aimed at strengthening friendship and business links between our two cities.

3. Specific Events

- 3.1 The itinerary for the visit was very busy, with a diverse range of meetings and ceremonial events, the most notable included:-
- 3.2 **The laying wreaths and floral tributes at ceremonies in Volgograd to commemorate the 65th Anniversary of the victory over fascism** – These included visits to the war memorial at "Bald Hill" (so called because there was no grass or vegetation remaining on this piece of high ground overlooking the City of Volgograd after the battle in 1941) and the site of the Eternal Flame of Fallen Fighters situated in the centre of Volgograd. We also attended the ceremony held at the war memorial on Mamayev Hill.

On the 9th May was the Victory Day Parade held in the main square in Volgograd. This is an annual event and coincides with the end of the Second World War, which is marked by a public holiday in Russia. Video link pictures of the parade held in Moscow was also shown on a large screen at the event.



3.3 Attendance at the formal reception given by the Mayor of Volgograd to sign additional protocols to the Agreements on Co-operation – Coventry was one of several twin cities/towns which had been invited to the 65th Anniversary events. A ceremony was held in which a representative of each city/twin town signed the agreement document and exchanged gifts with the Mayor of Volgograd.



3.4 Visits to educational/religious establishments – We visited Gymnasium No3, a school in Volgograd specialising in the teaching of English, where we met students and staff. During the visit we opened a small museum at the school dedicated to the memory of Lady Clementine Churchill, who had visited Volgograd at the end of the second world war and launched a campaign to raise funds for the rebuilding of the city and to support its citizens. We also pledged our support to try to establish a twinning link between this school and an appropriate school in Coventry (similar to the link I have established between Aldermoor Farm Primary School and the Lyceum No5 school in Volgograd). Whilst on this subject, I would mention that I also held a meeting later during the week of our visit with three members of staff of Lyceum No5, with a view to exploring the possibility of arranging to send students from Coventry, together with students from Volgograd, to attend an international conference for school children, to be held in Moscow in November 2010.



3.5 At my suggestion, we made a non-scheduled visit to the Volgograd State Pedagogical University and met with students and staff, namely Professor Nikolay Sergeev, Rector of the University, and Lydia Shashina, English Philology Department, who had been part of a delegation from Volgograd to Coventry in 2009. We discussed possible ways of strengthening links between this University and Coventry's two universities and also donating books for their library relating to the history of Coventry.



3.6 Following on from our visit to Volgograd in September 2009, when we met the Bishop of Volgograd and other clergy, we re-established friendship links with Father Oleg, of the Russian Orthodox Church, by visiting his Sunday School, where we met students and staff and exchanged gifts.



3.7 Meeting with Dr Elena Voznesenskaya – We held a 'follow up' meeting with Dr Elena and discussed matters arising from her study tour of University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire during her two week visit to Coventry earlier this year. Dr Elena also confirmed that she had arranged a temporary student placement at the Volgograd Hospital for a medical student at the University of Warwick, whom I arranged for her to meet during her stay in Coventry. Dr Elena is also a councillor (Deputy) on Volgograd City Council.



3.8 **Meeting with Alexander Malyshev** – We were entertained to dinner by Alexander Malyshev of the Rotary Club of Volzhsky and Volgograd, and I presented him with a certificate to formally record my thanks on behalf of the City of Coventry for the gifts he presented to the City to mark the 65th Anniversary of the twinning link between Volgograd and Coventry in 2009. These gifts included a public bench which has been installed in Hales Street between the Peace Garden and Volgograd Place.

3.9 **Meeting with Mr Vladimir Gordin, Chairman of the Accounting and Audit Chamber of Volgograd** – Mr Gordin was part of the delegation from Volgograd we received in Coventry in March 2009. The purpose of the meeting was to assess the progress of initiatives in relation to the development of business links through collaboration between the respective Chambers of Commerce in Volgograd and Coventry. This again followed on from discussions held during the visit of the delegation from Coventry to Volgograd in September 2009, that included representatives from the Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber.



I had to admit to Mr Gordin that I was concerned at the apparent lack of progress made in relation to this issue from the Coventry prospective and offered to try and promote discussions with the Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce to expedite matters. During the discussions held last September, issues were raised concerning strengthening links between Coventry's two universities and Volgograd, particularly in relation to post graduate students. With regard to this issue, I accepted an invitation to be interviewed by Vyacheslav Yagubkin of the local newspaper about my visit to Volgograd and the history of the twinning links with Coventry. During our discussions, it transpired that Mr Yagubkin had studied English, very briefly, at Coventry Polytechnic (now Coventry University) in the 1970's. Mr Yagubkin, apparently, since his return to Russia, had attempted to strengthen links between the universities in Coventry and Volgograd, but had not been very successful owing to the fact that Russian was not a subject studied at either Coventry or Warwick Universities and that there had been very few students from Russia enrolled at our local universities over the years. I indicated to Mr Yagubkin that I would try to promote these links.

3.10 **Meeting with Mr. Roman Grebennikov, Mayor of Volgograd, and other Representatives of the Volgograd City Administration** - After the victory commemorations were over and other delegations had departed, we were given lunch by Mayor Grebennikov and other representatives of the Volgograd City Administration. I took this opportunity to suggest to Mayor Grebennikov that Coventry and Volgograd should make our twinning links even more meaningful and effective by setting a standard for adoption by other twin cities and towns throughout the world, by promoting the following five objectives:-

1. Education within our schools.
2. Education within our universities.
3. Business development through our respective Chambers of Commerce.
4. Health care through dialogue and exchange between our two hospitals.
5. Religious development and cultural understanding through dialogue and exchange between our two cathedral authorities.

3.11 These objectives had been the themes of all of our meetings held during our visit to Russia and were wholeheartedly supported by Mayor Grebennikov. I mentioned our proposals at all of

the remaining meetings held during our visit to Russia, subsequent to our meeting with Mayor Grebennikov, and these were warmly received by all.

3.12 **Meeting with Dr Georgi L Muradov, Ambassador, The Government of Moscow** - During our 'stop over' in Moscow, on our return journey from Volgograd, we took the opportunity of arranging a meeting with Dr Muradov, Head of Moscow's Department for External Economic and International Relations, to have open discussions on matters of mutual interest. We discussed possible ways to improve business, cultural and educational development and he too was very supportive of my initiative to improve our twinning links with Volgograd, as referred to above. We were joined at our meeting by Ian Wiggins of the British Embassy in Moscow and later in the day we met with Ian's manager, Patrick Haughey, First Secretary (Political Section) at the British Embassy, and also Caroline Wilson, Minister Counsellor (Economic and Trade and Investment) whom, it transpired, had links with Coventry (her mother hails originally from Bell Green). We ended the day with a brief tour of the British Embassy in Moscow.



4 **Cost of attending** for Lord Mayor and Senior Civic Administrative Officer only.

Flights	£962.00
Russian Visas	£211.90
Russian Currency (Roubles)	£500.00
Accommodation	£3682.19
Subsistence	£400.46
Excess Baggage (for gifts received)	£223.17
Total	£5,979.72

5 **Benefits**

5.1 A number of benefits have resulted from the visit, namely:-

- Attendance of the civic party at the 65th anniversary celebrations of the victory over fascism (end of World War II) and reinforcement of our twinning links.
- Reinforcement of the twinning link between Lyceum No5 School in Volgograd and Aldermoor Farm Primary School in Coventry, and the possibility of establishing twinning links between Gymnasium No3 School in Volgograd and another appropriate school in Coventry. Possibility of Coventry school children being represented at an international schools conference to be held in Moscow.
- Reinforcement of religious links through Father Oleg and the Russian Orthodox Church.
- Reinforcement of business and links with the City of Volgograd through the respective Chambers of Commerce.
- Reinforcement of university links by our visit to Volgograd State Pedagogical University.
- Declaration of the five objectives to make the twinning links between Volgograd and Coventry more meaningful and effective and setting a standard for adoption by other twin cities and towns throughout the world.
- Establishing business/cultural etc. contacts between Coventry and the City of Moscow.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 The visit was extremely successful and has resulted in the potential for tangible benefits to both Coventry and Volgograd and has significantly strengthened the twinning links between the two cities and the potential for even further strengthening with the adoption of the five twinning objectives. The lasting impression gained from the visit was the welcome received by the delegation by everyone we met in Volgograd, especially by the people of Volgograd during my impromptu walkabouts on the City's streets.
- 6.2 Various civic gifts were exchanged, which are available for inspection in the Lord Mayor's Office at the Council House.
- 6.3 The Lord Mayor's Office and the International Office, in consultation with the Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce, will be responsible for pursuing the follow up actions arising from the visit.
- 6.4 As I leave office as Lord Mayor of the City of Coventry, I consider that I have done much to strengthen the twinning links between Coventry and Volgograd and trust that my successors will continue the good work, especially in relation to the establishment of the five objectives aimed at making the twinning links between our two great cities more meaningful and effective.

List of background papers

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Papers open to public inspection

Description of paper:	Location
Civic Visit to Russia (May 2010) File	Lord Mayor's Office, Room 36, Council House

Approved by the Cabinet Member (Policy, Leadership and Governance) held on:
24th March, 2010

Report: Authority for Attendance at Conferences etc.