



Coventry City Council

7b

Public report

Report to

Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

6th April 2011

Report of

Councillor Lakha

Title

Report Back on the Work Of Outside Bodies – Coventry Association for International Friendship 2010/2011

1 Purpose of the Report

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

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Continue to support CAIF (Coventry Association for International Friendship) to promote community links as part of the policy of the City Council for Peace and Reconciliation.

3 Benefits to the City Council of the Appointment

- 3.1 City Council is committed to support the Peace and Reconciliation policy and CAIF plays an active role for continuing this policy in conjunction with Lord Mayor's office.

4 Attendance Record and Remuneration for the Appointment

- 4.1 Coventry City Council's representative on Coventry Association for International Friendship is Councillor Lakha. During the period May, 2010 to January, 2011 inclusive three meetings were held, of which Councillor Lakha attended all three.
- 4.2 There is no remuneration for the delegated member.

The report from Mr John Moore Secretary of the CAIF is attached for information.

List of background papers

Proper officer:

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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 2010

1 Objectives

The Association has worked in several ways to spread the culture 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.

A third objective has been to underpin Coventry council's international policies of peace and reconciliation.

A fourth aim is to build up links with ethnic minority groups in Coventry: this is illustrated below in the Kiel programme, in which we included a visit to a Sikh temple and a talk by Mehru Fitter at the Multi-Faith Centre.

The fifth objective has been to make a significant contribution to Coventry Peace Festival.

2 Membership & Finance

The city council's grant guarantees the running expenses of the Association, such as printing and postage. Members pay their own expenses when they travel abroad on a CAIF visit. Subscriptions also increase our income, collected from our membership of between sixty and seventy. Receipts drawn from social events helped to increase total reserves.

3 Officers and Committee Members

President	The Lord Mayor, Cllr Brian Kelsey
Chairman	Cllr John Gazey
Vice-Chair	George Miles (for three-quarters of the year); and Pru Porretta
Secretary	John Moore
Assistant Secretary	Mary Goodwin
Treasurer	Ben Freeman
Social Secretary	Pat Trickett

Committee:

Cllr Ram Lakha, city council representative
Diana Dodd
Maureen Porter
Linda Hirons

Jennifer Smith
 Hazel Lynn
 Peter Warden
 Christine Oddy
 Slavica Stojisavljevik, representing the Serbian community

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

Obituary: George Miles

The death of George, Vice-chairman of CAIF was as sudden as it was unexpected, in February this year. He was born in Birmingham but loved Coventry. One of its features that appealed to him was the sustained effort of the city council and the Cathedral, backed by citizen groups, to foster peaceful international contacts. His cheerful, kindly style made him a first-class ambassador for the city.

4 Incoming visits

In August 2009 a large group of friends from the **Vannes** area of Brittany were hosted by CAIF. Vannes is, of course, a partner-town of Coventry. The group included several young people, attracted by the publicity given in Vannes to these exchange visits. They toured the city, enjoyed a Breton dance social held at the Coventry & North Warwickshire Cricket Club, and had a light-hearted meeting with the Lord Mayor, Cllr Jack Harrison.

In accordance with the tradition that has grown up in recent years, we took them to explore their Celtic roots in Wales, this time to Cardiff, where they were greatly impressed by the Welsh Assembly building and facilities for spectators.

This year saw a more ambitious form of hosting. We held a **Kiel** Holiday- School, where the aim was to teach a group of Kiel visitors more systematically the history of Coventry. It worked out very well. Particular tribute must be paid to two Herbert Museum curators, Hugh Jones and Paul Thompson, who talked to them respectively about Coventry's old cloth and ribbon industries and about our medieval history. Likewise, Canon David Porter gave them a lively lecture on the history of the Cross of Nails movement.

The details of the programme are perhaps worth inclusion, as they may be repeated or copied on similar lines for future groups who want a larger educational content in their visit to Coventry:

Coventry Association For International Friendship: KIEL Holiday-School

Monday

9.00 Lecture Hall, Coventry Cathedral:

1. World War II's consequences for Coventry

Cathedral and the City: Welcome to the holiday school
Birth of town-twinning and formation of CAIF, with *John Moore* ; friendship with Kiel – recalled by *Peter Warden*

10.00 -11.30 Reconciliation Tour.

12.00 lunch option in the Cathedral Restaurant

13.00 - 14.00 The Cross of Nails: talk by

Canon David Porter

14.30 Council House (Room Diamond 1): Post-war
planning; pedestrian precincts;
today's reconstruction aims, with

Maureen Porter

Walk in the Precinct and the city centre

Tuesday

**2. 10.00 Herbert Museum: Coventry's Industries
through the Ages,** with *Hugh Jones*

From Wool to Silk; watch-making, bicycles;

20th century industrial boom; industrial structure today ;

Lunch option in the Herbert

14.00 Museum of Road Transport ;

15.00 St Mary's Guildhall, with *Cllr John Gazey*

Wednesday

3. 10.00 Multi-Faith Centre: Post-war social diversity
with *Mehru Fitter*

Migration effects;

Multi-ethnic and multi-faith Coventry today

11.30 depart to Sikh Temple: Sri Guru Singh Sabha
Gurdwara,
with transport kindly provided by the Temple
Option of lunch at the Temple
14.30 Visit to Leamington Spa

Thursday

4. 10.00 Herbert Museum: Coventry's Early History
with *Paul Thompson*, of the Herbert Museum
Romans, Saxons, Vikings;
Medieval Coventry; the monasteries and their dissolution ;
Walk round the Third Cathedral; the Undercroft
Lunch – as you like it
14.30 visit to Kenilworth Castle: collection by car outside
The Sports Centre in Fairfax St
17.00 (approx) by car to Allan & Pat's home

Friday

5. Cultural Traditions
9.30 Council House (Committee Room 2)
Lady Godiva legend, with *Pru Porretta*
10.00 George Eliot, with *John Burton*, of the *George Eliot Fellowship*.
10.45 (approx): Education in Coventry, with *Mary Goodwin*
11.30 Shakespeare on the Doorstep: introductory talk by
Diana Dodd
Lunch – as you like it
13.45 collection by car from the Sports Centre for Stratford on
Avon and the Shakespeare trail, led by Diana.

Volgograd link

In June 2009 a small delegation from Volgograd city council came to Coventry at the invitation of our council. CAIF has had a good relationship with Volgograd for nine years, and so we entertained the group in a Kenilworth restaurant. But there was more to the visit than that. In the Volgograd war museum there is a famous tablecloth dating from the Second World War alongside the ceremonial sword presented by King George VI. The tablecloth was embroidered by members of the Co-op Women's Guild in Coventry and expressed Greetings to allies.

The Volgograd delegation brought its own tablecloth, on which were embroidered many names, including names of CAIF members,

whose signatures had been obtained through the post and copied on to the tablecloth. We believe it has been placed in the war museum beside the original tablecloth, as a symbol of peace.

Hiroshima visit halted

More recently, we were due to entertain a group of seven visitors representing Hiroshima's Coventry Club. A total party of two-dozen people were booked for an evening meal, which had to be cancelled when the plague of volcanic ash forced the suspension of flights from Japan.

We look forward to the resumption of the visit in the not too distant future.

5 Outgoing visits

In late May 2009, social secretary Pat Tricket took the Nightingales to sing with a similar young women's choir in **Dresden**. They returned four days later with the German partner-choir, all 42 of them, including accompanying adults. It was a great show of support for Coventry-Dresden twinning in its 50th year.

November Peace Festival (i)

At a CAIF public meeting in the Methodist Central Hall, on the Pathway to Peace in Afghanistan (Chairman: Cllr John Gazey), Secretary of State for Defence Bob Ainsworth spoke up for the war as a campaign to crush Al Qaeda and keep terrorism away from our streets, while seeking to win the support of a majority of Afghans.

Bruce Kent, Vice-President of CND, argued that the war encouraged terrorism, and that a negotiated peace through the United Nations was the way forward.

Peace Festival (ii)

Community Concert in St Mary's Guildhall: Music, Song and Dance Unite Us

It was presented by an ethnic mix of Coventry performers, consisting of the Agua Panela Latin-American band; Irish singer Carmel Silver; Angela Baxi's Soulful Choir; a rousing African drummer; the graceful Indian classical dancer, Aanika Chopra; the polished Polish soprano, Joanna Kundra; and the Nightingales, who sang with great clarity and

passion.

Pru Porretta was the compere.

6 Publicity

Press publicity is unreliable. There has not been any coverage of the Peace Festival concerts, and reportage of foreign visitors is very rare. The Bob Ainsworth meeting received pre-publicity and reportage. The historical sketch of CAIF – the Blue Book – continues to be useful publicity, and a source of information about Coventry to our visitors.

7 Social activities

Social gatherings, particularly at the home of Allan and Pat Trickett, help to strengthen ties amongst our members.

Coventry Association For International Friendship: Development Plan, 2010-11

1 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, Coventry Cathedral and CAIF.

Note: Exchange visits are our core activity, but invitations are often issued and confirmed early in the new calendar year, so that the following programme is not final.

2 Outgoing visits

We expect to visit Dresden and Vannes; and possibly Graz.

Enquiries are also in hand to secure a cheap flight to Belgrade, where we hope to stay in budget accommodation.

If it becomes practicable, particularly for reasons of cost, the visit will be led by a new member of our committee, of Serbian nationality.

3 Incoming visits

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 August 2010. The programme has a wide scope. It includes a meeting with the Lord

Mayor, Cllr Brian Kelsey, a talk on the birth of town-twinning, and lectures in the Herbert on Coventry's historic industries and medieval political and social history.

Canon David Porter of the Cathedral talks on the Cross of nails movement. There is the usual tour of the city centre attractions - not forgetting Meschede Way- and coach trips to Stratford and the Cotswolds, and to Cambridge.

5 Public meetings

In addition to the Peace Month event, one or two public meetings on international themes will be held.

6 Peace Festival

This year the Blitz 70th Anniversary will be commemorated in a concert on November 13

7 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.

8 Social activities

These will be continued on past lines, with the addition of a monthly pub lunch, to which new prospective members will be invited

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