



REPORT BACK ON CONFERENCE/SEMINAR

REPORT TO: Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

15th June 2011

REPORT OF: Lord Mayor of the City of Coventry 2010/11
Councillor Brian Kelsey

TITLE: Civic Visit to Dresden -

DATE: 10th – 14th February 2011

VENUE: Dresden, Germany

1. Recommendation

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

2. Background

- 2.1 The Lady Mayoress and I were invited by the Mayor of Dresden, together with the Bishop of Coventry and Mrs Cocksworth and a representative of the Diocese, Reverend Robin Youett, to represent the City of Coventry at a number of ceremonial events as part of their remembrance weekend.
- 2.2 The link between the two cities is based on civic links of the two administrations and relationships between the Frauenkirche (Dresden Cathedral) and Coventry Cathedral. 2009 saw the 50th anniversary of this relationship.
- 2.3 It was most regrettable that just immediate prior to our arrival we received news that Mayor Helma Orosz, Mayor of Dresden had been taken ill and was in hospital. A number of her Deputies represented her at the official events during our visit.

3. Cost of attending

	Costs Approved by Cabinet/Cabinet Member	Total of Actual Costs
Conference Fees	Nil	Nil
Flights	£450	£455.70
Additional Travel Expense	£35 Travel Insurance	£32.68 Travel Insurance
Accommodation	Nil	Nil
Subsistence	Unquantified	£263.66

4. Benefits

4.1 The itinerary for the visit was aimed at strengthening connections between the cities of Dresden and Coventry, with a diverse range of meetings, visits and ceremonial events, the most notable included were:

- Meeting with Deputy Mayor Dirk Hilbert, which included the official handover of gifts, signing the Golden Guest Book of the City of Dresden and the symbolic act of friendship by drinking from the 'Pax Optima Rerum'.
- By way of background, in September 2010, the Mayor of London, the Mayor of Dresden and myself, launched an exhibition entitled "*Under Attack London/ Coventry /Dresden*" at the London Transport Museum. This exhibition will transfer to Dresden Transport Museum in September 2011. The delegation received a tour of the Museum by Joachim Breuninger, Director of the Museum.
- Hosted by Markus Pöhl, Head of Sales at Volkswagen, the Lord Mayor visited "Transparent Manufactory", the site where the VW Phaeton is manufactured and observed state-of-the-art car manufacturing.
- As a Coventry Blitz Survivor, I took part in a very moving war witness event at the Frauenkirche alongside Günther Kannegießer, who witnessed of the bombing of Dresden. We both described our personal recollections and experiences of living through the atrocities of the bombing of our two Cities.
- A second similar war witnesses' public event was held by the Brücke/Most Foundation at the Council House of the district Dresden-Blasewitz where I, Günther Kannegießer (as referred to above) and Michal Salomanović, a holocaust survivor from Ostrava, a city also twinned with Coventry, gave their recollections.



- The 66th anniversary commemorations of the 1945 Allied bombing campaign that killed more than 20,000 people began with a wreath-laying ceremony at the municipal cemetery where thousands of victims are buried. I laid a wreath on behalf of the Council and citizens of Coventry.



- Later that same day, the whole delegation took part, along with 17,000 other people, in forming a human chain around the city centre of Dresden. The purpose of the chain was to demonstrate the people of Dresden's shared wish to link the commemoration with a declared belief in peace, democracy and human rights and remembering the victims of the bombing.



- The delegation attended the presentation of the Dresden Peace Prize to Daniel Barenboim, which is given in recognition of attempts at preventing or defusing conflicts between states or peoples. This year's prize was given for Mr Barenboim's work with the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra. Richard Weizsäcker, Germany's former president who visited Coventry with HM The Queen Mother in 1990 for the 50th anniversary of the Coventry Blitz commemorations, delivered the commendation.



- The final item of the itinerary was to visit the "Green Vault" and "Türkische Cammer" at the Royal Palace for a spectacular tour through the treasury collection and artworks from the Renaissance and Baroque periods.

4.2 In addition to the ceremonial duties undertaken by the delegation, meetings were held between the Bishop of Coventry and the Frauenkirche where discussions ensued on plans for holding Coventry Cathedral's golden jubilee celebrations in May 2012. It should be noted that:

- The Frauenkirche intend to present to the city a 2m high statue, which, it is hoped, will be in place for the Jubilee weekend in May 2012.
- It is expected that a delegation from Dresden will be invited to travel to Coventry for the period of Cathedral's celebrations, representing both Dresden's administration and the Frauenkirche Foundation.

4.3 It was noted that Dr Peter Meis, Superintendent of the Kreuzkirche, Dresden (Church of the Cross) will be visiting Coventry for 2-3 weeks in September 2011 to attend an English language school.

4.4 There were a number of occasions throughout the visit where I had opportunity to engage in conversation with Dr Alan Russell OBE, Chairman of the Dresden Trust and Vice-Chair of the British German Association. The nature of our discussions focussed on the differing experiences of how the two cities were rebuilt following their destruction, and, more importantly, maintaining the momentum of exchanges between the two cities.

4.5 The delegation from Coventry attracted much media interest from local and national television and newspaper sources during the commemorative weekend.



List of background papers

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Papers open to public inspection:

None

Description of paper:

Conference Approval Form, Report and Minute (Approved by Cabinet Member (Corporate and Neighbourhood Services) at the meeting held on 9th December 2010 – Minute of the meeting 68/10 refers).

Location: CH59