



Coventry City Council

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Public report

REPORT BACK ON CONFERENCE/SEMINAR

REPORT TO: Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

REPORT OF: Mary Morrissey - Assistant Director, Streetscene and Greenspace

TITLE: Representation at City Day in Volgograd

DATE: 8th-12th September 2011

VENUE: Volgograd, Russia

Recommendation

The Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee is recommended to note the positive outcomes of Cllr. John Mutton and Mary Morrissey's visit to Volgograd, Russia from 8th to 12th September 2011.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Mayor and Lady Mayoress were invited to Volgograd by the Acting Mayor of Volgograd to represent the City of Coventry at a number of events for the Volgograd City Day celebrations in September 2011. Unfortunately, due to the untimely death of the Lady Mayoress, they were unable to attend. The Leader of the Council, Cllr John Mutton and the Director of City Services and Development, Martin Yardley, stepped in and accepted the invite. The Director of City Services and Development was also then unable to attend, so Mary Morrissey, Assistant Director Streetscene & Greenspace attended with Cllr Mutton. The trip took place from Thursday 8th to Monday 12th September 2011.
- 1.2 The visit was aimed at strengthening connections between Volgograd and Coventry that were established during a number of previous visits to Volgograd by Council Members and Officers and return visits to Coventry by Volgograd officials.
- 1.3 The itinerary for the visit was very busy, with a diverse range of meetings and events. The most notable included:
 - Meeting the Acting Mayor of Volgograd, Sergey Sokolov to discuss the strengthening of ties between Volgograd and Coventry.



- Meeting with the chair of the City Council Ms. Irina Kareva, to also discuss the strengthening of ties between Volgograd and Coventry.



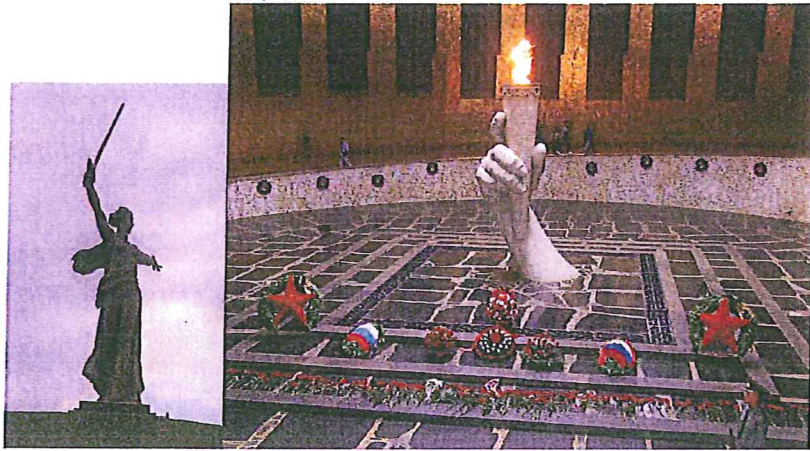
- A number of discussions with officers from the International Development Department about strengthening links, particularly through the children of both cities.



- Visits to a number of schools to discuss the strengthening of the relationships between the children of Volgograd and Coventry.



- Visits to Mamaev Hill (the site of the main battle of Stalingrad), the 'Panorama' (a museum commemorating the battle of Stalingrad) and Kazachii Kuren (an early settlement village).



- A visit to an art gallery where pictures drawn by Coventry schoolchildren were hung.



- A meeting with the Korneevs (a family who made part of the quilt for the coat of Lady Godiva for the Godiva Awakes Olympic project).



- Attendance at an official reception held by the Acting Mayor Mr. Sergey Sokolov and the Chair of the City Council Ms. Irina Kareva.



- Participation in the City Day procession through Volgograd.



1.4 In addition to Coventry, there were also official delegations from the following in Volgograd as part of City Day celebrations:

1. Plonsk (Poland) including the mayor of Plonsk and the chair of the City Council;
2. Olevano Romano (Italy) including the Mayor;
3. Ortono (Italy) including the Mayor and the City Manager;
4. Gaziemir (Turkey) – the deputies of the City Council;
5. Ingolstadt (Germany) including the Burgomaster.
6. Israel

1.5 This wide number of delegations also gave Coventry the opportunity to discuss twinning and further links, particularly with Plonsk, as both Coventry and Plonsk have a mutual twinning link.



2. Cost of Attendance

	Total of Actual Costs
Return Flights for Cllr. Mutton and Mary Morrissey	£1,204
Single Entry Russian Visa (2 @ £135.20)	£270.40
Subsistence	£91.11
Travel Insurance (2 @ £16.34)	£32.68
Total	£1,598.19

NB: Costs approved by Cabinet for airfare were £966; the difference in cost was due to an increase in flight charges once the booking was made following approval.

3. Benefits

- 3.1 The visit was extremely successful and has resulted in the potential for tangible benefits, particularly to children and students in both Coventry and Volgograd. The visit also strengthened the twinning links between the two cities.
- 3.2 As the delegation was led by the Leader of the Council, not the Lord Mayor as in previous visits, Volgograd officials were able to get a different perspective on how Coventry Council operates. Mutual discussions took place with officials (the Acting Mayor, the Chair of the City Council and officers from the International Development Department) about the difficulties facing local government and all were keen to hear Cllr Muttons perspective on both local and

national government in the UK in these challenging times. All agreed that the benefits of twinning would best be realised through citizens, particularly children, not politicians.

- 3.3 City Officials and school heads and schoolchildren were also keen to hear about the Olympics and the part Coventry is to play in hosting football. The visit also included meeting the family who had won a competition in Volgograd to design part of the Godiva Awakes quilt.
- 3.4 All officials and residents we met were keen to continue twinning links and particularly to set up links between children, including arranging exchange visits with schoolchildren in 2012.
- 3.5 Cllr Mutton was interviewed and filmed for local and regional television 3 times and radio once during the visit, to discuss the links between the Cities and promote Coventry Council and the wider City as an excellent place to do business, work and spend leisure time.



- 3.6 Coventry was also asked to support Volgograd in its attempt to achieve a 'European Diploma', by writing a letter of support to the European Union in Strasbourg. The support of Coventry, its oldest 'twin', was seen as vitally important to Volgograd.
- 3.7 On his return, Cllr Mutton met with Martin Reeves, and Colin Green and Nick Jones of CLYP to discuss the visit and how relationships between Coventry and Volgograd children could be developed. In addition, a competition for schoolchildren to exchange gifts and further working

together via e-mail, teleconferencing and other social media are also being explored.

3.8 Specifically since the visit, six secondary schools in Coventry have proposed ideas for collaborative projects with schools in Volgograd, which have been sent to Inna Plotnikova (International Development, Volgograd). The projects are:

- Barrs Hill - Building relationships, understanding other societies
- Ernesford Grange - Food, crafts and technology
- Grace Academy - History and culture. Possible language link
- Lyng Hall - Cultural links and family learning, involving pupils who speak Russian
- Westwood - Peace and reconciliation and student voice
- Cardinal Wiseman - Comparisons around post war redevelopment of our cities.

3.9 Coventry have also been asked to identify 3 schools to whom three Volgograd schools can send Christmas toys which have been produced by their pupils. Receiving schools will be expected to exhibit the toys in their school or community and send photographs back to Volgograd. It is hoped that this might develop into an annual Christmas toy exchange.

4 Conclusion

4.1 It was apparent from the way the Coventry delegation was treated that Coventry City and the Council is held in extremely high regard by Volgograd officials and residents. Cllr Mutton was the first to be introduced at every civic and official occasion, the first to be asked to give a speech and the Coventry delegation led all the other delegations in the City Day procession.

4.2 Various civic gifts were exchanged, which are available for inspection in the Lord Mayor's Office at the Council House.

4.3 Colin Green, Director of CLYP will be responsible for pursuing the follow up actions arising from the visit.

List of background papers

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Papers open to public inspection

Description of paper: Report Back on Conference/Seminar

Location: CH60