



Coventry City Council

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Public report

REPORT BACK ON CONFERENCE/SEMINAR

REPORT TO: Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee 8th August 2012
REPORT OF: Lord Mayor, Councillor Tim Sawdon
TITLE: Civic Visit to Kiel, Germany for 130th Kieler Woche
DATE: 15th – 18th June 2012
VENUE: Kiel, Germany

1. Recommendation

1.1 The Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee is recommended to endorse the report of the Lord Mayor's civic visit to Kiel and the associated Kieler Woche (Kiel Week) celebrations and the three suggestions at the end of the document that Scrutiny may wish to consider.

2. Background

2.1 The purpose of my visit, as the Lord Mayor of the City of Coventry, was to attend and take part in a programme of events hosted by Kiel City Council to mark the formal opening of Kieler Woche. This is an annual invitation because Kiel is a twin city of Coventry.

2.2 The Coventry delegation was also invited to attend and participate in the International City Forum entitled "Civic Participation – The Key to Greater Democracy in the Community?" This followed up the previous year's Forum which discussed 'Is Local Democracy in Crisis?'

2.3 The visit and participation in the Forum allows for exchange of information and best practice in local government, with practitioners from 14 of Kiel's twin and friendship cities.

2.4 My attendance provided an opportunity to raise the profile and represent the City Council and Coventry at a European and International level.

2.5 Kieler Woche is the biggest summer festival in northern Europe and the largest sailing sports event in the world. This year there was a full ten-day programme with over 1,000 events for more than 3.5 million visitors from all over the world. Now in its 130th year, the sailing regatta continues to grow. Over 6,000 competitors, from over 50

countries, participated in the sailing classes. The competitors were based at Schliksee, the Olympic sailing village, which we also visited during our visit.

- 2.6 The city centre also plays host to numerous events such as the International City Forum, Kiel Week Opening Ceremony and the International market. The vibrant market is held in and around the main square and offers stalls, food and music from all over the world.
- 2.7 A very special event is the Kieler Woche Opening Ceremony which takes place in the Town Hall Square on the Saturday. During the traditional Holstenbummel that follows, the whole city centre becomes a party zone, with lots of music, international food specialities. There is something for everyone.
- 2.8 The Lady Mayoress and the Lord Mayor's Support Officer accompanied me on the visit.
- 2.9 It is interesting to note that a large proportion of the cost of Kiel Week is borne by a number of very generous sponsors.

3. Cost of attending

3.1 The costs for attending were as follows:

	£
Flights Birmingham to Hamburg for LM and GP:	332.47
Travel Insurance	49.01
Refreshments	31.20
Total	412.68

3.2 Costs were covered by the Lord Mayor's Hospitality Budget. The costs of accommodation and meals were funded by the City of Kiel. The Lady Mayoress paid for her own costs.

4. Benefits

4.1 Through my visit as Lord Mayor, Coventry and Kiel were able to reinforce its twinning links. It should be noted that Kiel was the first city to respond to the Coventry Cross of Nails concept. We were fortunate to be able to visit the Church of St Nikolai in Kiel where the Cross of Nails is on display.

4.2 The visit provided an opportunity to maintain relations with Kiel and to continue to promote peace and reconciliation in a modern world.

4.3 There were a range of civic events at which I, as the Lord Mayor, was regarded as an important guest amongst Kiel's other twin cities. I attended many civic functions over the weekend including the official reception to start the event on the first evening. This was hosted by the Stadtpräsidentin (City President) of Kiel, Ms Cathy Keitzer. I sent greetings from the City of Coventry to the Citizens of Kiel via the Visitor's Book.



4.4 During this event, I had the opportunity to have informal discussions with representatives of a number of the delegations present.

- 4.5 At the official dinner, held at the conclusion of the reception, we shared a table with representatives from the City of Riga from Latvia – three ladies who all spoke perfect English!
- 4.6 Karen Thomsen was the official interpreter for our delegation and hosted Coventry throughout the visit. She imparted extensive economic, cultural, historic and local knowledge about Kiel and is a regular visitor to Coventry, arranging student exchanges which need regenerating.

Similarly, our delegation was assigned Councillor Erika Diehr, a member of Kiel City Council. There were several beneficial discussions about the political and executive arrangements in Kiel and Coventry. Further introductions were made to Dr. Christian Diehr, Erica's son, who works directly for the German Chancellor's office, Angela Merkel, with a responsibility for European relations. There were informal discussions about European Policy with Christian, who had the opportunity to work in the UK Government's Cabinet Office in 2005 through a German/UK civil servant exchange programme.



- 4.9 Links were maintained with the British-German Society through close personal contact with Dr Lisa Homrich.
- 4.10 In preparation for our participation at the International City Forum, a number of questions had been circulated in advance to each local authority represented at the City Forum relevant to the topic to be discussed - 'Civic Participation - The Key to Greater Democracy in the Community?' Answers to the questions had been returned to Kiel by the City Council, also in advance of the City Forum, so that these, together with those submitted by the other local authorities represented, could be included in the literature circulated at the Forum.

I answered supplementary questions at the Forum to amplify the points set out in our written answers.

5. Other Issues

Several issues arise from the visit and I would ask Scrutiny co-ordination Committee (SCRUCO) if it is prepared to give the following further consideration:-

1. Other delegations were astounded that Coventry had such a low turnout (26%) in the 2012 local elections. Would SCRUCO be interested in examining the responses from the 12 local authorities who replied to the questionnaire to see if there are lessons that we might learn in improving 'civic' participation in local decision making?
2. Whilst I would not suggest doing anything on the same scale as Kiel, would SCRUCO be interested in looking at the feasibility of a 'Coventry Week', that might link the Godiva Festival with the Coventry Inspiration Book Awards, the Positive Images Festival, Armed Forces Day and perhaps an international food festival - to name just several suggestions?
3. Would SCRUCO be prepared to put a bit of 'impetus' behind Karen Thomsen's efforts to promote more cultural exchanges with Kiel?

List of background papers

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Papers open to public inspection

Description of paper:	Location
Civic Visit to Kiel Papers	Lord Mayor's Office, Room 36, Council House

Approved by the Cabinet Member (Community Safety and Equalities) on: 29th May 2012
Report: Authority for Attendance at Conferences