



Coventry City Council

Public report

REPORT BACK ON CONFERENCE/SEMINAR

REPORT TO: Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee 11th September, 2013
REPORT OF: Lord Mayor, Councillor Gary Crookes
TITLE: Civic Visit to Kiel, Germany for 131st Kieler Woche
DATE: 21st-24th June 2013
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.

2. Background

2.1 As Lord Mayor of the City of Coventry, I was invited to attend and take part in a programme of events hosted by Kiel City Council to mark the formal opening of Kieler Woche. Kiel is a twin city of Coventry and as such we receive an invitation to this event each year

2.2 As part of the proceedings, the Coventry delegation was invited to attend and participate in the International City Forum entitled "Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – and its implementation in both Kiel and its twin and partner cities". A paper was prepared by the Policy and Communities Officer, Partnership and Performance Division, Chief Executive's Directorate.

2.3 Participation in the Forum fosters an exchange of information and best practice with 16 of Kiel's twin and partner cities, therefore offering a large cross-section of viewpoints to be aired.

2.4 Being present at this event gave me the opportunity to raise the profile and represent the City Council and Coventry at a European and International level. This year's visit was especially important as both the President of the City Council, Mr Hans-Werner Tovar and the Oberbürgermeisterin, Ms Susanne Gaschke, were new in post and this was an ideal opportunity to meet them both for the first time.

- 2.5 Kieler Woche is the largest summer festival in northern Europe and the largest sailing sports event in the World. This year the event was held from 22 – 30 June and comprised both sailing and cultural events, the majority of which are free of charge.
- 2.6 The city centre plays host to numerous events such as the International City Forum, Kiel Week Opening Ceremony and the International market. Market stalls are placed in and around the main square and offer food, gifts and music from all over the world.
- 2.7 The largest event attended was the Kieler Woche Opening Ceremony which takes place in the Town Hall Square on the first Saturday. The event this year was broadcast live from the Town Hall Square on the local TV station and was attended by a large crowd. All civic guests were presented with a small gift from Mr Hans-Werner Tovar as a memento of the occasion.
- 2.8 The Lady Mayoress and the Lord Mayor's Personal Assistant 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 including Audi, Veolia, Thyssen Krupp, Survitec (whose Head Office is in Southampton) and several other large companies.

3. Cost of attending

- 3.1 The costs for attending were as follows:

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| | £ |
| Flights Birmingham to Hamburg for LM and LMPA: | 553.42 |
| Travel Insurance | <u>16.33</u> |
| TOTAL | <u>569.75</u> |

- 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' costs were paid for by the Lord Mayor.

4. Benefits

- 4.1 During my visit as Lord Mayor, invaluable first meetings were made with Kiel's new President of the City Council and the Oberbürgermeisterin. Kiel was the first city to respond to the Coventry Cross of Nails concept and we were very pleased 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 establish links with their newly appointed officers and to continue to promote peace and reconciliation in a modern world.
- 4.3 As the Lord Mayor of Coventry, I was regarded as an honoured guest at the various civic functions attended over the weekend including the official reception to start the event on the first evening. This was hosted by Mr Hans-Werner Tovar. I wrote a message of greetings from the Citizens of the City of Coventry to the Citizens of Kiel via the Visitors' Book.



- 4.4 I took the opportunity to have informal discussions with representatives of other twin and partner cities during the course of this event.
- 4.5 At the official dinner, held at the conclusion of the reception, we sat with Dr Lisa Homrich of the British-German Society who gave us invaluable insight in to the links between our two countries.
- 4.6 Karen Thomsen was the official interpreter for our delegation and accompanied us throughout the visit. Karen lives and works in Kiel and has wide-ranging knowledge of the area and was able to impart local information about many aspects of the region.

Councillor Erika Diehr, a member of Kiel City Council acted as host for the duration of our visit. We had many interesting discussions about the political and executive arrangements in Kiel and Coventry. Councillor Diehr introduced us to her son, Dr. Christian Diehr, who works directly for the German Chancellor's office responsible for European relations. There were informal conversations with Christian on our personal thoughts on the relative local government and political positions. Dr Diehr worked in the UK Government's Cabinet Office in 2005 through a German/UK civil servant exchange programme.



- 4.7 Prior to our participation at the International City Forum a number questions had been circulated in advance to each local authority represented at the City Forum relevant to the topic to be discussed - "Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – and its implementation in both Kiel and its twin and partner cities". A response to these questions was returned to Kiel by Coventry City Council in advance of the City Forum, thus enabling our response and those of other local authorities represented being included in the literature circulated at the Forum.

5. Other Issues

Several issues arise from the visit and I would ask Scruco if it is prepared to give the following further consideration:-

1. Wearing of the Civic chains and badges of office drew approving comments from and facilitated conversation with various other civic dignitaries. It is recommended that this practise is allowed to continue.
2. I also echo two points raised by former Lord Mayor Councillor Tim Sawdon from last year's visit:

“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’, which 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?”

“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, Council House |

Approved by the Cabinet Member (Community Safety and Equalities) on:
14th June 2013 **Report:** Authority for Attendance at Conferences etc.