



Coventry City Council

Public report

REPORT BACK ON CONFERENCE/SEMINAR

REPORT TO: Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee
REPORT OF: Lord Mayor, Councillor Lindsley Harvard
TITLE: Civic Visit to Kiel, Germany for 134th Kieler Woche
DATE: June 17th – 20th 2016
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 "Strategies for integrating migrants and refugees in the community". A paper, which I gave a short introduction to, was prepared and presented by Peter Barnett, Head of Libraries, Advice, Health and Information.
- 2.3 Participation in the Forum fosters an exchange of information and best practice with 10 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. The paper highlighted the excellent work being undertaken in Coventry. It is evident from talking to the other delegates that there is still much work to do and we have taken away valuable information.

We were given the opportunity to visit two refugee camps in Kiel. One was on the site of an unused military barracks and the other an unused technical college student accommodation building. Kiel Council had very little notice of the number of migrants to expect but they have utilised their resources in a highly efficient manner. They made it plain to us that they needed to use these buildings, which needed to be adapted in a timely manner, because a shortage of flats in Kiel made it impossible to house migrants within the city itself. But the city is doing all it can to see more flats are built.

Whilst the approaches taken by Germany and the UK to resettle and integrate refugees are quite different, it was interesting for the Coventry delegation to learn about the innovative and practical approaches implemented in Kiel and to have the opportunity to discuss potential solutions to some of the shared challenges of integration with colleagues both from Kiel and the other twin cities present.

They have numerous migrant organisations and German-Foreign societies to aid integration.

- 2.5 Kieler Woche is the largest summer festival in northern Europe and the largest sailing sports event in the world and comprises 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.
- 2.8 The Head of Libraries, Advice, Health and Information and the Lord Mayor's Personal Assistant accompanied me on the visit. In addition, during the time of our visit, the Lord Mayor's Administrator was also in attendance as part of a two week internship hosted by Kiel City Council to provide valuable work experience and commence planning for the 70th Anniversary of the twinning link in 2017.
- 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 (who provide a fleet of vehicles for the event).

3. Cost of attending

- 3.1 The costs for attending were as follows:

	£
Flights Birmingham to Hamburg return for LM, Head of Libraries, Advice, Health and Information and LMPA:	578.11
Travel Insurance	50.00
Subsistence	<u>52.74</u>
TOTAL	£680.85

3.2 Costs of travel were covered by the Lord Mayor's Hospitality Budget. The costs of accommodation and meals were funded by the City of Kiel.

4. Benefits

4.1 During my visit as Lord Mayor I was able to meet with Mr Tovar the President of the City Council. 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 reinforce links with officers, make new contacts in the area of migration 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.

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.

4.7 Councillor Erika Diehr, a member of Kiel City Council acted as host for the duration of our visit. Councillor Diehr introduced us to her son, Dr Christian Diehr, who works directly for the German Chancellor's office responsible for European relations. Dr Diehr worked in the UK Government's Cabinet Office in 2005 through a German/UK civil servant exchange programme.

4.8 An invitation will be extended to Herr Tovar and Councillor Erika Diehr to the Remembrance Service events in Coventry in November 2016, this invitation is generally accepted by Kiel.

List of background papers

Proper Officer:

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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: 25.2.16

Report: Authority for Attendance at Conferences etc.