



Coventry City Council

Public report

REPORT BACK ON CONFERENCE/SEMINAR

REPORT TO: Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee **20th December, 2017**
REPORT OF: Lord Mayor 2017/18, Councillor Tony Skipper
TITLE: Civic Visit to Belgrade
DATE: 1st – 6th October 2017
VENUE: Belgrade, Serbia

1. Recommendation

1.1 Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee is recommended to endorse the feedback report of the Lord Mayor's civic visit to Belgrade, accompanied by 3 representatives of The Belgrade Theatre, and the Principal Private Secretary to the Lord Mayoralty and the positive way the relationship with Coventry was reflected.

2. Background

2.1 Coventry has been formally twinned with Belgrade since 1957 therefore 2017 marked the 60th anniversary.

2.2 Coventry's Belgrade Theatre was built in 1958 as part of the reconstruction of Coventry after World War II. 'The Belgrade' acquired its name in recognition and thanks for a gift of timber from the Serbian capital that was used in the construction of the auditorium.

2.3 However, only in last 10 years has the twinning link started to re-energise itself following a period of inactivity during the Bosnian War - a conflict between Belgrade and Sarajevo – two of Coventry's twin cities.

2.4 The purpose of the visit was for the Lord Mayor to lead the delegation from the Belgrade Theatre, involving the members of the Community Education Team, with view to meeting representatives of the Children's Cultural Centre Belgrade and to meet the organisers of the annual Joy of Europe Festival with a view to young people from Coventry participating in future years.

2.5 The Lord Mayor's visit also provided opportunity to discuss other areas of co-operation with the Mayor of Belgrade to raise the city's profile and represent the City Council and Coventry at a wider European level.

Cost of attending

	Costs Approved by Cabinet/Cabinet Member	Total of Actual Costs
Conference Fees	Nil	Nil
Flights for 3 persons	£546*	£984.51
Accommodation	Nil	Nil
Subsistence	£200	£120.55

*Approximate cost at the time of submitting Conference Approval Form.

2 Benefits

2.2 The itinerary for the visit was focussed on commemorative events to mark the 60th anniversary of twinning between the city of Coventry and Belgrade and the Joy of Europe Children's Festival. The most notable parts of the itinerary were:

- A special meeting with the Mayor of Belgrade and HE Ambassador of GB to Serbia to discuss future areas of co-operation, particularly in relation to arts, culture and education.



- The gift exchange with the Mayor. Coventry presented a clock with a specialised clock face to mark the anniversary as part of the Belgrade Theatre's Clock Project.



- A meeting with representatives of Cultural Children's Centre Belgrade on their engagement with and providing opportunities for young people in Belgrade.



- A visit to the Belgrade Theatre in Belgrade. The Lord Mayor was keen to hear of their plans to redevelop the car park at the front of the Theatre (shown below) into a pedestrianised area with a view to naming it 'The Coventry Plaza'. Coventry will be kept informed of progress of this development.



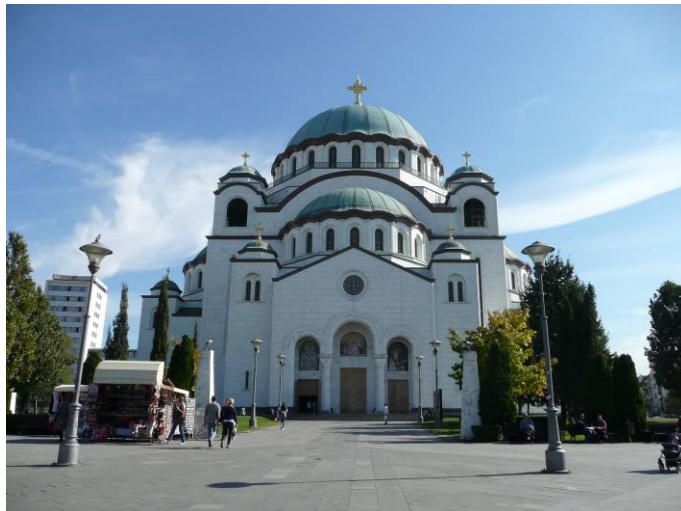
- As part of visit we visited a few of their major tourist attractions: Princess Ljibic's Residence – due to its cultural and architectural importance, the residence has been designated a 'Monument of Culture of Exceptional Importance'



- Nikola Tesla Museum: dedicated to honouring and displaying the life and work of Nikola Tesla and his critical role regarding history of electrification of the world and future technological advancements in this area – hence the Tesla car.



- The Church of Saint Sava is a Serbian Orthodox church - one of the largest church buildings in the world.



- The Joy of Europe Festival 2017 – in 1968 Children’s Cultural Centre Belgrade launched an initiative to set up an international children’s gathering to celebrate International Child’s Day. Each October, Belgrade families welcome hundreds of children from all over Europe, who display their customs and skills in city squares, streets and venues.
- Children from many countries take part, but the UK are currently not represented. It is hoped that Coventry children will represent the UK in future years led by the Belgrade Theatre.



List of background papers

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Other contributors: None

Papers open to public inspection: None

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Approved by Cabinet Member Community Development on 18th September 2017