



Coventry City Council

Public report

REPORT BACK ON CONFERENCE/SEMINAR

REPORT TO: Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee
REPORT OF: Lord Mayor 2018/19, Councillor John Blundell
TITLE: Civic Visit to Dresden
DATE: 11th – 15th February 2019
VENUE: Dresden, Germany

1. Recommendation

1.1 The Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee is recommended to endorse the report of the Lord Mayor's civic visit to Dresden and the positive outcomes of the visit.

2. Background

2.1 The Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress, together with the Deputy Leader of the Council, Bishop of Coventry and school delegation from Cardinal Newman RC School were invited by the Mayor of Dresden to represent the City of Coventry at a number of ceremonial events as part of the 60th anniversary of the twinning link as well as the anniversary of the destruction of Dresden.

2.2 To emphasise the significance of the commemorative events, HRH The Duke of Kent was also in Dresden for the occasion.

2.2 13 February 1945 saw 200 British bombers drop hundreds of tonnes of explosives and a second wave of 500 aircraft flew over Dresden creating a firestorm across the city. Some 25,000 people died in the air strikes.

2.3 Due to our common fate, the link between the two cities is based on civic links of the two administrations as well as strong relationships between the Frauenkirche (Dresden Cathedral) and Coventry Cathedral. 2019 is recognising the 60th anniversary of this relationship.

Cost of attending

	Costs Approved by Cabinet/Cabinet Member	Total of Actual Costs
Conference Fees	Nil	Nil
Flights	Approx £1,200	£1,219.56
Accommodation	Nil	Nil
Subsistence	£200	£218.84

3. Benefits

3.1 The itinerary for the visit was aimed at representing the City of Coventry at commemorative events to mark the 60th anniversary of the twinning link as well at the 1945 anniversary of the destruction of Dresden. It was very important for Coventry and the Lord Mayor to attend the following:

- In the presence of HRH The Duke of Kent, attended at the 10th International Dresden Peace Prize which was awarded to Kim Phuc Phan Thi, the naked napalm girl pictured during the Vietnam War, in honour of her work for UNESCO and children wounded in war, and for speaking out against violence and hatred.



- A visit to 62nd Secondary School 'Friedrich Schiller' to meet with the pupils of Cardinal Newman RC School delegation, who are developing a school exchange programme. A balloon release carrying messages of peace was just one of the activities. It is hoped that plans can be arranged for a return visit from Dresden during this anniversary year.



- Presentation of Cross of Nails ceremony by Bishop Christopher, Lord Bishop of Coventry to Sophienkirche-Busmannkapelle, the 5th Cross of Nails centres now in Dresden.



- The Opening Ceremony of the exhibition 'Condition Humaine' – as part of the Dresden/Coventry arts exchange programme. Supported by the Dresden Trust and the German British Society two artists from Coventry John Yeadon and Lisa Gunn work alongside Monika Marten and Kerstin Franke-Gneuß from Dresden. This exhibition will be coming to Coventry and displayed in Coventry Cathedral in late May 2019.



- Meeting with Mayor Dirk Hilbert, which included the official handover of gifts and signing the Golden Book of the City of Dresden.



- The 74th anniversary commemorations of the 1945 Allied bombing campaign that killed more than 20,000 people began with a ceremony at the Heidefriedhof Cemetery where thousands of victims are buried. The Lord Mayor, Deputy Leader and children from Cardinal Newman RC School laid white roses on behalf of the Council and citizens of Coventry.



- Participated in the Human Chain: On 13th February each year a human chain is formed around Dresden's Old Town designed to symbolically protect it against right-wing extremists and recall the events of February 1945. The Lord Mayor stands alongside the Mayor, Councillor Khan, the Bishop of Coventry and children from Coventry and Dresden.



- The main Service to mark the 60th Anniversary of relationships between Coventry and Wroclaw was held at the Kreuzkirche. The Lord Mayor delivered a reading and The Bishop of Coventry gave the sermon. A candle was placed in Neumarket, Dresden's main square, to mark the commemoration of bombing and to pay respects.



- A unique opportunity to address a Full Meeting of Dresden City Council, specifically invited for the 60th anniversary of the twin city relationship. It was at this meeting that the Lord Mayor delivered the bilingual Message from the City Council:

“In 1959, following the common fate of two cities during World War II and after years of combined efforts for reconciliation and understanding amongst its people, resulted in the official Twinning of two great cities – Coventry and Dresden.

The Community of Cross of Nails, which is still a very important symbol of peace for our city today, has also played a significant part of our histories. There are now four Cross of Nails Centres in Dresden that helps spread our message of unity.

On the 60th Anniversary of Twinning the Council of Coventry extends to the City of Dresden a message of peace and wishes to reaffirm its commitment for the future as we continue to work towards a more peaceful world. Our ties of friendship which bind us have been cultivated and strengthened during this time through education, faith, arts and a shared love of culture. It is inspiring to think that a bond formed through hardship and at a time when friendship was not the first reaction of many, is still so strong 60 years later - and that it enriches so many lives today.

Thank you to the City of Dresden for everything you have done for Coventry over the past 60 years and we look forward to many more years of friendship.”



- The final item of the itinerary was to visit the old and new “Green Vault” at the Royal Palace for a spectacular tour through the treasury collection and artworks from the Renaissance and Baroque periods.

3.2 Media profile: The visit attracted much media interest from local, national and internationally television, radio and newspaper sources during the commemorative weekend. Interviews and press conferences were built into the schedule.



List of background papers

Author: Jane Barlow, Principal Private Secretary to the Lord Mayoralty

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Papers open to public inspection: None

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