

REPORT BACK ON CONFERENCE/SEMINAR

REPORT TO: Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee **12th December 2012**
REPORT OF: The Lord Mayor of Coventry 2012/13
Councillor Tim Sawdon
TITLE: Civic visit to Jinan & Beijing, China
DATE: 18th – 26th September 2012
VENUE: Jinan and Beijing, China

1. Recommendation

The Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee is recommended to endorse the report of the Lord Mayor's civic visit to Jinan and Beijing, the positive outcomes achieved and to endorse the proposed actions arising.

2. Background

The Lord and Lady Mayoress were invited to attend the 2012 Jinan Cultural Sister Cities Cultural Exchange and Springs Dialogue. The conference was attended by 19 international delegates for 14 countries including the US, South Africa, France, Germany, Finland and many others. As Coventry is the longest standing of Jinan's twin cities Coventry was the lead delegation and the Lord Mayor was, on a number of occasions, asked to represent all the visiting delegations.

The Lord and Lady Mayoress were accompanied by Richard Moon, Senior Development Executive, from City Services & Development Directorate and Mark Eaton, Director of the China Liaison Office, UKTI, who was able to combine this visit with a Trade mission to Hong Kong and China.

The conference culminated in the signing of a declaration committing all the participating delegations to work together in promoting cultural exchange, tourism, educational and economic co-operation and protection of the environment.

A copy of the declaration is annexed hereto (appendix A).

A key theme of the conference was the subject of water utilisation and preservation, a key issue for the rapidly expanding Chinese economy. This issue may present opportunities for Coventry companies to engage with the Chinese authorities to explore potential business opportunities.

The visit also included high level meetings with senior representatives of both Jinan Municipal People's Government and the Chinese People's Congress.

During a brief stop over in Beijing the Lord and Lady Mayoress were able to meet with a representative of UKTI and representatives of UK companies on a trade mission to Hong Kong and China.

3. Specific Events

The mayoral party arrived in Jinan on Thursday, 20th September 2012. The afternoon of the 20th was spent as guests of the Jinan Foreign Affairs Office.

The evening was spent preparing speeches for the key note conference to be held on 21st September.

The morning of the 21st September 2012, was devoted to the opening ceremony of the conference. It was opened by the Mayor of Jinan and the Lord Mayor responded on behalf of all the delegations. This was followed by cultural presentations by a number of delegations and an exhibition on the utilisation of water resources by the delegate nations. The Mayor of Jinan was particularly impressed by our display which included photographs of water conservation projects which were kindly provided by the National Farmers' Union based at Stoneleigh (the Lady Mayoress is PA to the President and helped to arrange our presentation).

Following a delegates lunch all the parties convened for the 2012 Jinan International Sister Cities Cultural Exchange & Water Culture Workshop. As lead delegation the Lord Mayor made a further address on behalf of all the delegations emphasising the strong cultural, educational and economic links binding the sister cities together and making specific reference to the links between Jinan and Coventry and looked forward to the visit to take place in 2014 of the RSC Swan Orchestra to China to mark the 450th anniversary of the birth of William Shakespeare. The conference culminated in the signing of The Declaration of Jinan International Sister Cities Cultural & Tourism Alliance.

On the evening of 21st September 2012, all the delegates were present at a banquet hosted by Mr Yang Luyu, Mayor of Jinan Municipal People's Government whose administration represents the 6.8 million residents.

The morning of Saturday 22nd September 2012, was spent visiting Baotu Spring Park and the Damming Lake. These sites hold important cultural and economic significance as the natural springs provide the water for Jinan and underpin the cities economy.

The Coventry delegation was then invited to a private lunch hosted by Ms Duan Qingying, Vice Director of Provincial People's Congress. Issues of education, cultural and trade co-operation were discussed.

The party were then taken on a tour of Jinan Museum.

On the evening of 22nd the Lord and Lady Mayoress were guests of Wang Min, Party Secretary of Chinese People's Congress Jinan Committee at a formal banquet. The Lord Mayor spoke on the importance of UK/China relations and in particular the strong links between Coventry and Jinan.

On the morning of Sunday 23rd September 2012, was commenced at the studios of Jinan TV to record a television interview with the Lord Mayor on the Declaration and Cultural Alliance and more broadly on Jinan/Coventry relations.

Following a brief visit to Zhangqiu Baimal Springs Park the delegation was invited to a private lunch with Ms Liu Yanzhou from the Jinan Foreign Affairs Office. Discussions were also held regarding activities for 2013 to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Coventry Jinan twinning links. Jinan proposed to bring a high level delegation to Coventry in the first quarter of 2013 with Coventry sending a delegation to Jinan in the autumn. Both of these delegations would also include business representatives.

The party departed Jinan on the afternoon of 23rd September 2012 for Beijing.

A familiarisation tour around Beijing was held on Monday, 24th September 2012.

The party left China on Tuesday, 25th September 2012.

Photographs taken at all the key events are included within Appendix B of this report.

4. Cost of attendance

		Total of Actual Costs
Flights		£2304
Accommodation		£840
Transfers		£603
Subsistence		£252
Insurance		£107
Visas		£390
Visit support costs		£1,685
TOTAL		£6,181

The expenditure limit stated on the Travel Approval form was £6,672, the costs therefore fell £490 within budget. The Lady Mayoress paid her own costs.

5. Benefits

The trip was extremely successful and has clearly strengthened the ties between Coventry and Jinan culminating in the signing of the Declaration. It is also clear that Jinan hold the relationship with Coventry as being particularly important as witnessed by the Lord Mayor's party being treated as lead delegation.

Gifts were exchanged which are available to view at the Lord Mayors office.

It is clear that further tangible benefits can flow from this trip; in particular it is proposed that the following actions are followed up by the Lord Mayor's Office in conjunction with Council officers and the China Liaison Office of Coventry Chamber of Commerce and UKTI.

Investigate and publicise the opportunities for Coventry students to attend Jinan University through the exchange programme.

Meet with Severn Trent Water plc to make them aware of potential business opportunities that may be available to them in Jinan through water re-cycling technology and, if appropriate arrange to introduce STW to Jinan CPC officials through a trade mission.

To contact RSC Swan Orchestra to assess the feasibility of including Jinan in their 2014 Chinese tour.

List of background papers

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Papers open to public inspection

Nil