

Cabinet
Council

5 March 2013
19 March 2013

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member (Policy Leadership and Governance) – Councillor J Mutton

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Chief Executive

Ward(s) affected: all

Title: Developing Coventry's international links

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive Summary:

Coventry has an international reputation as a city of peace and reconciliation. In addition to its post-war historic links the city has a wide range of international links and relationships - economic; educational and cultural – that continue to develop and change over time. The Council's international strategy directs and prioritises any international activity including the development and support of key international links through formal civic engagement led by the Lord Mayor of Coventry. It is proposed that the current priorities of the Council's international activity should be maintained, and, in view of economic and global change, new international links should be considered and developed to support future growth and jobs in Coventry.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is asked to agree the recommendations set out below.

Council is asked to endorse the recommendations set out below.

- (1) International activity undertaken by the Council should continue to focus on three priorities:
 - Peace, reconciliation and supporting democracy
 - Economy, business and trade
 - Culture, education and community links
- (2) To pursue formal civic twinning arrangements between the city of Coventry and the Indian city of Jalandhar
- (3) To work with local businesses to explore the development of new international links with Brazil
- (4) To continue to recognise the value of community-led international links and initiatives, providing civic support to such activities when it is appropriate

List of Appendices included:

None

Background papers:

None

Other useful papers:

Report to Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee on Civic Visit to India – Lord Mayor of Coventry
Coventry-Punjab India Twin City Proposal 2013 – Business Growth Team Coventry City Council
Coventry City Council International Strategy

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

Yes

19 March 2013

Developing Coventry's International links

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 Coventry has an international reputation as a city of peace and reconciliation since the end of the Second World War. In addition the city and its communities have a wide range of international links and relationships which provide economic; educational and cultural benefits to local people. The Council contributes to the development and strengthening on international links for the benefit of the city through its international activities, including formal civic activity led by the Lord Mayor of Coventry. Following a recent review of trade and investment opportunities it is proposed to optimise the benefits of civic activity by establishing links with new areas of economic interest.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 The Coventry City Council's international strategy, adopted in November 2004, seeks to achieve benefits from international activity for the city by focusing on:

- Peace, reconciliation and supporting democracy
- Economy, business and trade
- Culture, education and community links

It is recommended that any future international activity undertaken by the Council should continue to focus on these priorities, responding to changing economic and global circumstances.

- 2.2 **Peace, reconciliation and supporting democracy** - recent work undertaken by the Coventry Partnership Business Group has underlined again how important peace and reconciliation is to local people and to local pride in Coventry. Peace and reconciliation is one of the key themes of the new Coventry and Warwickshire economic narrative and the Council is currently working with partners to develop this further. The majority of the city's historic twinning arrangements were developed through peace and reconciliation work. The Council continues to support the annual Coventry Peace Festival and maintains twinning and other civic links with towns associated with peace and reconciliation, including active links with Volgograd (formerly Stalingrad) in Russia, together with Kiel and Dresden in Germany. Coventry Cathedral's Centre for Reconciliation and the Community of the Cross of Nails and Coventry University's Centre for Peace and Reconciliation continue to develop and support new and existing international links for Coventry.
- 2.3 **Economy, business and trade** – Coventry's most active civic international arrangements are with its most recent twin city, Jinan in China. This international link was developed thirty years ago by the Council working with local businesses and the Chamber of Commerce and it continues to be important for economic development activity. A review of potential trade and investment opportunities of civic links by the council's Business Growth Team and discussions with local businesses have flagged up the potential economic benefits to Coventry of exploring the development of civic links to the other "BRIC" countries (Brazil; Russia; India; China) - namely India and Brazil. The recent UK trade delegation to India led by the Prime Minister has emphasised the need to develop closer ties to take advantage of the potential economic opportunities for UK businesses.
- 2.4 In February 2012 the Lord Mayor of Coventry, Councillor Keiran Mulhall, made a civic visit to India. As part of the visit the Lord Mayor's delegation had initial discussions with three cities in the Punjab region of India with a view to exploring potential civic links: Chandigarh; Ludhiana and Jalandhar, aiming to build on local community links to help develop potential future economic benefits to the city. An assessment of the economic and cultural benefits of twinning has identified the city of Jalandhar as a potential twin city and this report recommends that the Council agrees to pursue a formal twinning link with Jalandhar.

- 2.5 There is also currently considerable local business interest – including from the automotive industry - in South America, particularly in Brazil where it is anticipated that there will also be potential benefits for local businesses from the 2016 Olympic Games. Coventry does not have the strong community and cultural links with Brazil as it has with India and it may well be that the formal twinning route is not the best way to develop links with cities in this country. It is therefore recommended that the Council should work with local businesses to explore potential relationships and links with cities and regions in Brazil which may take a different form to the more traditional civic twinning link.
- 2.6 **Culture, education and community links** – Coventry’s diverse communities continue to bring new international links to the city, adding to the city’s vibrant cultural mix, and the city’s two universities also continue to develop international links for Coventry. Coventry’s schools have developed a variety of links including those developed during the Olympics. In addition a range of community-led international initiatives bring cultural and education benefits to the city as well as value to the people in the countries that the initiatives are delivered. Some recent examples include the city’s local charity and community-led responses to the tsunami in Sri-Lanka and the earthquake in Pakistan; and locally based international projects such as the eye care camps in the Punjab and the Ibba Girls School initiative in the South Sudan.
- 2.7 Although the Council does not take the lead in this activity there are occasions when civic engagement and support assists this community-led work, particularly in supporting the city’s response to international emergencies, and it is recommended that this support should continue when it is appropriate.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

- 3.1 This report has been informed by recent work led by the Coventry Partnership’s Business Group to develop a better understanding of the city and its economic narrative. This research showed that peace and reconciliation is still very important to Coventry people and communities and a considerable source of civic pride. The proposals have also been based on information sourced from local businesses.

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

- 4.1 If the recommendations of this report are agreed it is proposed that a formal approach will be made to the city of Jalandhar and the potential twinning arrangement pursued as soon as possible. The development of potential links with Brazil would take place over a longer period with further recommendations being brought to Council for consideration in the next municipal year.

5. Comments from Director of Finance and Legal Services

- 5.1 Financial implications
There is no additional allocation of finance associated with the recommendations in this report and any costs would be met out of existing budgets.
- 5.2 Legal implications
There are no specific additional legal implications from the recommendations in this report.

6. Other implications

None

6.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's key objectives / corporate priorities (corporate plan/scorecard) / organisational blueprint / Local Area Agreement (or Coventry Sustainable Community Strategy)?

The Council's international activity aims to contribute to the Council's corporate objectives and priorities. The specific recommendations in this report aim to support the Council's objective to promote growth and jobs in the city and pride in the city.

6.2 How is risk being managed?

Any international activity undertaken by the Council is assessed for risk through the Council's risk assessment procedures.

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

There are no additional direct impacts on the organisation.

6.4 Equalities / EIA

The Council's international activity aims to promote peace, reconciliation and support for democracy, enhances pride in Coventry and to bring local communities together. This work aims to have a positive impact on equalities and cohesion in Coventry.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

As part of its international activity the Council has worked with other cities on sustainability and environmental issues. Expanding the city's international links into South America and India might require more air travel although increasingly international activity takes place through electronic and virtual methods of communication.

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

Most of the international links in Coventry are made by partner organisations such as the Universities; local businesses and local communities. The recommendations in this report mean that the Council would continue to work with and support organisations in the city in the development of key international activity and the development of links. In particular, the recommendations aim to support the development of links that would be of benefit to local businesses.

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