

# **ST ALBANS CITY AND DISTRICT TOWN TWINNING STRATEGY**

**Agreed by the Portfolio Holder for Community  
Development on 1 April 2006**

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# **TOWN TWINNING STRATEGY**

## **Introduction**

The Local Government International Bureau indicates that the impetus for town twinning after the second world war was to promote peace and reconciliation bringing together countries which had previously been in combat. The focus for this twinning centred on family exchanges with a substantial cultural content. Following the UK's entry into the EEC twinning activity increased in the 1970s and 1980s with activities focussing more on school exchanges. Teachers saw the benefits to pupils of experiencing the culture and language of another country first hand.

The early 1990s saw a particular interest in the growth of partnerships with central and Eastern Europe as UK government sought to encourage the growth of democracy and free market economies. Currently (2004) there are over 2,000 formal twinning links in the UK, 50% of which are with France and 25% with Germany. The remaining 25% are with communities all over the world including the USA, China and countries of the commonwealth. These are complemented by an increase in the number of informal partnerships and project based activities many led by community groups , in particular with the Caribbean and the Indian sub continent.

## **Town Twinning in St Albans City and District**

St Albans City and District and two local parish councils, Harpenden Town and Colney Heath have much experience of twinning links with the European continent. The district council also has had an informal friendship link with Sylhet in Bangladesh. See Appendix 1 for details of existing formal twinning links in the district. These links have embraced formal civic visits, family exchanges, school exchanges, exchanges based on culture, sport, history etc often arranged by town twinning associations. There have also been visits around the themes of history and archaeology with the Museums department being involved. The friendship link with Sylhet was based on giving assistance to the local authority in terms of IT and administration.

Twinning in the district embraces all the activity referred to above and has obvious benefits for the people living in the District. It can help the Council to deliver its corporate aims as listed in Appendix 2.

## **Vision and aims of town twinning in St Albans City and District**

The Council will use town twinning to assist it to achieve all five of its corporate aims and will encourage as many members of the community as possible to be involved in international partnerships. The following are the specific aims of the council's town twinning strategy:

1. to encourage peace and friendship between people of different backgrounds and cultures and to encourage openness, fairness and inclusiveness.

2. to work in partnership with organisations in the community in building relationships links with communities abroad that will lead to mutual advantages in terms of learning about each other's cultures and enhancing the quality of life of the communities involved.
3. to promote appreciation of our heritage and the arts, and to promote St Albans as a place to be visited by tourists from our twin towns.
4. to encourage organisations to take part in building up relationships with organisations and businesses in our twin communities to bring advantage in learning from each other's methods of working and to promote trade between communities.

## Types of Links

To achieve the above aims the Council will work through the following forms of twinning:

- (a) **Formal town twinning** based on a long term friendship agreement involving the council in arranging formal civic visits on a regular basis to maintain the link. These visits can include project led exchanges connected with economic development, trade exchanges or exchanges of knowledge / skills as well as including friendship and cultural activities.

An inward and an outward civic visit should take place each year led by the mayor and councillors with a representative from an appropriate town twinning association. For details on how such exchanges should be organised and funded see Appendix 3.

The Council will support and encourage town twinning associations in the district who are involved in formal links (whether of district, town or parish level) in achieving links particularly related to building up friendship between communities based on historic, cultural, or sport activities. See Appendix 4 for details of the support that can be given.

- (b) **Informal links** of all sorts are also encouraged independently by other organisations such as schools, clubs, churches etc. Business organisations are also encouraged to engage in twinning activities in the form of project led exchanges if these can lead to positive benefits for the parties involved.
- (c) **Friendship Links.** These are also informal links such as that which the Council has had with Sylhet in Bangladesh.
- (d) **Project Led Links by Council Staff**  
The Council will arrange project led links with formal twins and on an ad hoc basis with other foreign towns. Links may involve physical visits or be carried out electronically. These should be organised by relevant portfolio holders and officers and should focus on e.g. economic development, heritage, tourism, knowledge exchange etc that assist the council in achieving its town twinning aims and corporate objectives.

These will also be incorporated into the Council's Service Plans. For details of such exchanges, funding etc see Appendix 5.

### **Criteria for Assessing St Albans City and District Town Twinning Links:**

- (a)** The formation of links with twin towns should be to further the aims of the Council's "Vision and Aims of town twinning" as specified above.
- (b)** There should be an active friendship group prepared to support and develop practical links on a regular basis with the each twin town.
- (c)** Any proposal for a new link should be supported by the Mayor and Council.
- (d)** Any existing link not meeting with (a) and (b) above should be seriously considered for termination by the Portfolio Holder preferably in conjunction with the Mayor and representatives of all Political Groups. Any decision to terminate should be taken by full Council.

### **Administration**

The co-ordination of all formal town twinning exchange activity will come under the dedicated officer of the Council. The post holder will maintain a forward schedule of all known future visits and ensure these are disseminated to relevant Council members and officers as well as town twinning associations and other relevant bodies. The dedicated officer will act as first port of call for any enquiry about town twinning activities and should be kept informed.

## TOWN TWINNING STRATEGY APPENDICES

### Appendix 1

#### Town Twinning Links in St Albans City and District

<b>Town</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Date Initiated</b>	<b>Anniversaries</b>	
Odense,	Denmark	1948	60	2008
Worms	Germany	1957	50	2007
Nevers	France	1974	35	2009
Nyiregyhaza	Hungary	1995	15	2010
Fano	Italy	1998	10	2008

#### Friendship Link in St Albans City and District

Sylhet	Bangladesh	1988	20	2008
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#### Town / Parish maintained Links

##### **Harpenden Town Council** with:

Alzey	Germany	1963	50	2013
Cosne-sur-Loire	France	1982	25	2007

##### **Colney Heath Parish Council** with:

Boissey-sur-Yon	France	1982	25	2007
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## **Appendix 2 Corporate Aims of St Albans City and District 2004**

Vision

Historic St Albans becoming Hertfordshire's Premier Community

Aim 1 To build a community that is open, fair and inclusive

Aim 2 To work in partnership for the health and well being of the community

Aim 3 To cherish and promote our heritage, arts and culture

Aim 4 To safeguard the environment

Aim 5 To ensure the District is a desirable place in which to live and work

### **Appendix 3 Organising and Funding Civic Visits**

Civic visits will be led by the Mayor to the District Council's twin towns. The Mayor will also lead the reception of civic visits from twin towns

The Mayor will lead a civic delegation which may include the Mayor's consort, the Portfolio Holder for Community Development, one councillor from each political party plus a relevant friendship association representative and an appropriate officer. The Mayor in consultation with the Community Development Portfolio Holder will decide whether partners of a) Members or b) the relevant Friendship Association representative should participate in a particular visit.

Visits should be organised by the dedicated twinning officer in conjunction with the Mayor's secretary. The aims of the visit should be agreed with the Mayor.

The travel costs of the Mayor and consort on outgoing town twinning visits will be met from the Mayoral Allowance. Other members will be responsible for their own travel costs (excluding travel to and from the Port or Airport).

Participation in meals for an incoming visit will be on the basis that the Mayor and their consort's meals, meals of the Portfolio Holder for Community Development, and one Member representative from each Political Group plus a relevant officer and one representative from the relevant Friendship Association plus the incoming delegation will be paid for from the Council's Town Twinning budget. Others participating in meals e.g. partners of councillors or members and spouses of relevant Friendship Associations will pay for their own meals.

A translation service will be provided as agreed with the Mayor and the Portfolio Holder for Community Development.

#### **Reports of Visits**

A short report of each visit should be prepared within one week of the visit by the relevant officer and published in the Members' Information Bulletin and the Town Twinning section of the District Council's website with a copy presented at the following regular meeting between the Portfolio Holder and the Friendship Association representatives. A composite of these short reports will be submitted to Cabinet once per year.

#### **Support for Non-Civic Visits**

Support for Non-Civic visits by Councillors at the invitation of a twin town will be agreed by the Portfolio Holder for Community Development in consultation with the Head of Paid Service.

## **Appendix 4 Support for Town Twinning and Friendship Associations**

### **A. Support for District, Town and Parish Associations**

The Council wishes to encourage participation by the community in town twinning activities. The Council will therefore support the associations in the following ways:

**Regular meetings** will be held by the Portfolio Holder with representatives of the twinning friendship associations at the Council offices (three times per year). These meetings will allow exchanges of views between the Council and the Associations on a range of topics including details of proposed visits and other activities.

**Forward Plans** will be maintained by the Council's dedicated officer covering formal and informal exchanges with our twin towns which will help to provide co-ordination between civic visits and informal visits.

**Accommodation for Friendship Associations Meetings** Friendship Associations are permitted to use District Council meeting rooms free of charge subject to availability.

#### **Help in obtaining EU Grants**

The Economic Development Unit of the Council should assist Friendship Associations to apply for grants including from the European Union for the development of town twinning activity.

#### **Grantfinder Service**

The District Council and the Council for Voluntary Services jointly provide a grant finding facility that can be accessed from the Council's website. From the website home page applicants should scroll down to the Funding Information box and click Funding Search. This will bring up a page containing information on using the free-to-use funding database. At the bottom of this page applicants can click on 'GRANTnet for Voluntary and Community Groups' which will bring up a registration form. When a user undertakes a search an email is automatically sent to the CVS who may be able to offer further assistance, for example by advising on other groups seeking similar grants. Please contact Scott McGlinchey at the District Council on 01727 819524.

### **B. Grants available to District-level Friendship Associations and social organisations**

#### **(a) Administrative Grants**

Small grants towards administrative expenses can be made to the District friendship associations on application and will depend on the amount of activity of the association in arranging exchanges.

#### **(b) Grants in connection with non civic exchange visits**

Applications for grants in connection with town twinning exchanges should be made as soon as possible once an exchange is agreed and on the appropriate form available from the dedicated town twinning officer at

the Council also available on the Council's web site. Applications will be assessed against each other and made to those who are fulfilling the Council's "Vision and aims for town twinning". Applications will be assessed by the Portfolio for Community Development who will receive advice from the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and the Head of Finance.

The amount paid per outgoing person on the exchange will be up to £15 and per incoming person will be up to £10.

**(c) Public Liability Insurance grants**

Grants are given towards costs of public liability insurance taken out by Friendship Associations.

## **Appendix 5 Organisation and Funding of Project Led Links by Council Staff**

Project led links (whether involving physical visits or carried out electronically) should be organised and led by the appropriate Council department in conjunction with the appropriate Portfolio Holder. Details of proposed project led visits should be reported to the Portfolio Holder for Community Development and to Cabinet with a copy given to the dedicated town twinning officer and the Mayor's secretary.

Funding for project led visits should be from the appropriate Portfolio Holder / department. The main costs are likely to be officer time. Ideally proposals should be worked up in time to go into the budget for the year in which the visit will take place and should be included in the Departmental Service Plan.

To stimulate project led visits an item should appear on the Council's senior officer management team's agenda at least twice a year. The senior officer in the Council's Economic Development Unit should be given the role of driving it forward.