

ST ALBANS CITY AND DISTRICT TOWN TWINNING STRATEGY

TOWN TWINNING STRATEGY

Introduction

The Local Government Association European and International Unit 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 (2012) 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.

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

St Albans City & District Council is not looking to establish any additional Twinning links. The following criteria will be used to assess each of the existing town twinning links on an annual basis.

- (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

Town	Country	Date Initiated		Anniversaries
Odense	Denmark	1948	70	2018
Worms	Germany	1957	60	2017
Nevers	France	1974	40	2014
Nyiregyhaza	Hungary	1995	20	2015
Fano	Italy	1998	15	2013

Friendship Link in St Albans City and District

Town	Country	Date Initiated		Anniversaries
Sylhet	Bangladesh	1988	25	2013

Harpenden Town Council

Town	Country	Date Initiated		Anniversaries
Alzey	Germany	1963	50	2013
Cosne-sur-Loire	France	1982	30	2012

Colney Heath Parish Council

Town	Country	Date Initiated		Anniversaries
Boissey - sur-Yon	France	1982	30	2012

Appendix 2 Aims of St Albans City and District Council

Vision and Aims

- To contribute to a high quality of life for all residents
- To deliver excellent services
- To support a cleaner, greener, healthier and safer District
- To support high quality local employment, business and tourism
- To represent the entire District and deliver localism by working closely with residents, community groups and County, Town and Parish councils

Commitments

- Protecting the vulnerable
- Planning for the future
- Delivering for young people and families
- Attracting and developing business and tourism
- Delivering sports and leisure facilities
- Enabling and delivering transport improvements
- Keeping the district cleaner, greener, healthier and safer
- Ensuring value for money

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 Engagement and Localism, one councillor from each political party plus a relevant friendship association representative and an appropriate officer. The Mayor in consultation with the Community Engagement and Localism 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 Civic Officer. 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 Engagement and Localism, 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 Engagement and Localism in consultation with the Chief Executive.

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 and Civic Officer with representatives of the twinning friendship associations at the Council offices (twice a 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 Civic Officer covering formal and informal exchanges with our twin towns which will help to provide coordination between civic visits and informal visits.

Accommodation for Friendship Associations Meetings Friendship Associations are permitted to use District Council meeting rooms for their meetings. This service is free of charge, but subject to availability.

Funding Advice

The St Albans Centre for Voluntary Service Funding and Advice Service supports voluntary and community groups in the district to apply for funding from a variety of sources.

www.cvsstalbans.org.uk

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

(a) Administrative Grants

Small grants towards administrative expenses limited to £50 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 Civic Officer at

the Council also available on the Council's web site. Consideration will be given to each application by the Member and Mayoral Services Team to ensure they meet the Council's "Vision and Aims for Town Twinning", Applications will be assessed by the Portfolio for Community Engagement and Localism who will receive advice from the Head of Legal, Democratic and Regulatory Services and the Deputy Chief Executive (Finance).

Applications should be made at least 21 days after the first date of the exchange trip to ensure that the application can be processed in a timely manner. Grants will not be awarded without supporting documentation including the application form and a report on the success of the trip. We that understand that there may be last minute changes to the trips and we ask that you advise the office of any changes at the earliest opportunity.

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

Please note that any grants awarded will be limited to £250 per organisation per year. The Council will consider awarding a higher grant under exceptional circumstances. All grant applications are subject to available budgets.

(c) Public Liability Insurance grants

St Albans City and District Council arranges for public liability insurance for the Friendship Associations within the district each year.

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 Civic Officer.

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 Business Plan.