

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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COMMITTEE	Finance, Policy & Resources
DATE	15 September 2015
DIRECTOR	Chief Executive
TITLE OF REPORT	Twinning & International Partnerships
REPORT NUMBER:	OCE/15/026
CHECKLIST RECEIVED	Yes

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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to bring before Committee applications for financial assistance from the International Twinning Budget 2015-2016 and to make recommendations ahead of the Priority Based Budgeting and Common Good Fund Reviews.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That Finance, Policy & Resources Committee approve the following grants from the International Twinning Budget 2015-2016:

- i) Contribution of £10,000 towards an exchange project between Harlaw Academy and Von Mueller Gymnasium in Regensburg, 28 October-1 November 2015 and May 2016
- ii) Contribution of £1,300 towards a visit by trustees of Friends of Gomel to Gomel to support established projects and develop new partnerships, 6-13 April 2016
- iii) Contribution of £6,000 towards Kincorth Academy hosting a school exchange programme with Regensburg's Albertus Magnus Gymnasium in Aberdeen, 4-9 October 2015
- iv) Contribution of £2,940 towards the attendance of a civic delegation and music group from Stavanger at Aberdeen's annual Christmas Tree Light Switch-On Ceremony to celebrate the 25th twinning anniversary of the two cities, 26 November 2015

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Full council approved the International Twinning Budget for 2015-2016 of £147,250. The approved budget from the Common Good Fund provides £102,000 of monies towards the support of twinning projects and/or visits. An additional £10,000 has been made available to support projects which celebrate twinning anniversaries in 2015. A total of £112,000 is available to support projects in 2015-16.

	<b>Balance of budget available as at April 2015</b>	<b>£112,000</b>
	<b>Opening Balance</b>	<b>£59,970</b>
i)	Contribution towards an exchange project between Harlaw Academy and Von Mueller Gymnasium in Regensburg, 28 October-1 November 2015 and May 2016	£10,000
ii)	Contribution towards a visit by trustees of Friends of Gomel to Gomel to support established projects and develop new partnerships, 6-13 April 2016	£1,300
iii)	Contribution towards Kincorth Academy hosting a school exchange programme with Regensburg's Albertus Magnus Gymnasium in Aberdeen, 4-9 October 2015	£6,000
iv)	Contribution towards the attendance of a civic delegation and music group from Stavanger at Aberdeen's annual Christmas Tree Light Switch-On Ceremony to celebrate the 25th twinning anniversary of the two cities, 26 November 2015	£2,940
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£20,240</b>
	<b>Closing Balance (if recommendations approved)</b>	<b>£39,730</b>

#### 4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

The health and safety implications of all visits are taken into account during planning, with any exceptional implications addressed at the time of application.

The Twinning & International Partnerships Officer regularly reviews the travel advice provided by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and is in close contact with counterpart officers in the twin cities to ensure information provided to participants is accurate and up-to-date.

Where individuals/groups from Aberdeen are travelling overseas, comprehensive pre-visit briefings are offered by the Twinning & International Partnerships Officer and all have the opportunity to ask questions and request support.

When participating in overseas visits, Council employees are covered by the Council's insurance policy while non-Council employees are instructed by the Twinning & International Partnerships Officer to obtain comprehensive travel insurance.

Long established twinning links will not be maintained without regular reciprocal visits and ongoing projects being initiated by communities, groups and individuals and there is the potential for the city's international image to be damaged if we don't continue to support established relationships.

Grants provided through the twinning budget provide individuals and communities from throughout Aberdeen City with the opportunity to engage with international twinning activities. In addition, incoming visitors to the city on twin city projects support the local economy through their participation at events and hospitality and retail expenditure while visiting the city.

The Twinning & International Partnerships Officer will provide a strong link between Aberdeen and our twin cities who also provide organisational support, advice and guidance when required.

They will also make recommendations on funding available to the group and offer support to foster a relationship with the city so that it is long lasting and beneficial to the people of Aberdeen without requiring on-going financial support from the public purse.

All groups participating in twin city activities are encouraged to develop sustainable relationships with their partner groups. Links between most of the twin cities of Aberdeen are active, and links which have not recently been engaged have been contacted to re-establish communications. It is important that all visits and projects through twinning are long-standing and fruitful to ensure their benefit to the local people of Aberdeen, to establish and promote positively the overseas image of Aberdeen and for best practice to be shared between cities.

## 5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

These recommendations are made ahead of the Priority Based Budgeting and Common Good Fund Reviews and involve the allocation of funds made available from the 2015-16 budget:

### i) **Contribution of £10,000 towards an exchange project between Harlaw Academy and Von Mueller Gymnasium in Regensburg, 28 October-1 November 2015 and May 2016**

Harlaw Academy have developed a new twinning partnership with Von Mueller Gymnasium in Regensburg. This is the first time that the school have participated in an exchange with a school from one of Aberdeen's twin cities. This year-long project will see Harlaw Academy host pupils and teachers from Regensburg in autumn 2015 and allow young people from Harlaw Academy to travel to Regensburg during the 2016 summer term.

Aberdeen City Council and Stadt Regensburg supported the professional development of teachers from Harlaw Academy and Von Mueller Gymnasium earlier this year through exchange visits with teaching staff. The aim of this programme was to provide a professional development opportunity to staff which would enable them to create an

exchange programme benefitting pupils from both cities. A report submitted by the Harlaw Academy staff following the visit highlighted the benefits of this introductory visit to Regensburg:

- Best practice in an international context was observed;
- The experience guided the school's International Learners initiative as part of the school improvement plan;
- Familiarisation of the school system and ethos instilled a greater confidence in teachers with regards to organising a new exchange;
- Face-to-face communications with German colleagues provided a conducive environment to developing cross-curricular communal projects

Harlaw Academy and Von Mueller Gymnasium have submitted plans for an initial three-year twinning programme. A programme of activities for this first year includes: the establishment of an e-twinning *Twinspace* that would be accessible to all pupils; a pen pal project facilitated by Modern Languages; and the involvement of Associated School Group primaries where appropriate.

A pupil mobility exchange is planned with 15 pupils and two teachers from Regensburg travelling to Aberdeen in October and a reciprocal visit by pupils from Harlaw Academy to Regensburg in May 2016. A diverse programme has been created for the Regensburg pupils which will include spending time with pupils in the school, outdoor learning with Adventure Aberdeen and discovering the social history of Aberdeen with guided tours of the harbour. A programme with similar outcomes will be arranged for the visit of young people from Aberdeen to Regensburg during the summer term.

This varied programme of distance learning and mobility exchanges promotes cultural awareness and communication skills to young people of Aberdeen. Pupils will develop a greater understanding of traditional and educational cultures and customs in different countries. Modern language communication skills will also be enhanced through year-long written and online correspondence and face-to-face contact during the exchange. These experiences demonstrate that Aberdeen City Council is committed to ensuring that young people of the city become global citizens, as required in the Curriculum for Excellence.

School pupils and teachers are investigating options to financially support the project, including social enterprise activities. An initial plan is for pupils from both cities to work with the Design and Technology

Departments in the autumn term to create wooden Christmas decorations. Half of the decorations will be kept in school, with the other half being sent to the partner school. Decorations will be sold at Christmas Fayres and Markets in both schools with all proceeds contributing to the outgoing exchange in May and any surplus supporting the programme in future years. Pupils have also discussed other fundraising opportunities including hosting Scottish/Bavarian stalls at school events, such as a photo booth where pupils can dress up in traditional clothes. Both schools are committed to ensuring the sustainability of the project and are investigating future funding streams, including UK German Connection.

This application seeks a total of £10,000 to support costs associated with hosting pupils from Regensburg in October and reciprocal travel costs by a group from Harlaw Academy to Regensburg in May 2016.

<b>Expenditure</b>		
Flights		£10,000
Accommodation		£4,000
Subsistence		£2,000
Internal Transport		£2,000
Activities		£2,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>£20,000</b>
<b>Income</b>		
Contribution from Stadt Regensburg		£10,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>£10,000</b>
Expenditure-Income		£20,000-10,000
<b>Total requested</b>		<b>£10,000</b>

**ii) Contribution of £1,300 towards a visit by trustees of Friends of Gomel to Gomel to support established projects and develop new partnerships, 6-13 April 2016**

‘Friends of Gomel’ is a registered charity based in Aberdeen which aids projects and partnerships between the two twin cities. Four members of the board intend to visit Gomel in April 2016. Whilst in Gomel, the trustees will evaluate the effectiveness of projects which they have previously financially supported and seek to develop new partnerships.

Friends of Gomel was established in 1991. The main objectives of the charity are to advance community development; advance the arts, heritage, culture and science; and to offer assistance to those in need.

They achieve these objectives by increasing awareness of Gomel and the twinning agreement; encouraging partnerships between groups and organisations in both cities; raising funds and providing goods and services to those in need in Gomel; and working across statutory, voluntary and private organisations in both cities to ensure efficient co-ordination of activities, including HomeStart, University of Aberdeen and Aberdeen-Gomel Trust.

A three year period has lapsed since the Trustees last visited Gomel in Spring 2013. During this time some new projects have requested financial assistance - such as a respite home for underprivileged Gomel children - and existing ones expanded - such as the donation of tools and equipment to Gomel Technical College. In order to assess whether the contributions and support made by the charity are effectively targeting relevant issues and ensuring value for money, the Trustees will travel to Gomel to meet with the organisations delivering the projects. The Trustees representing Friends of Gomel during the visit comprise of the charity's Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary and Ordinary Member. The Vice-Chair of the charity is also an Elected Member.

During their visit the Trustees will visit medical institutions (Diabetic and Cerebral Palsy Centres), educational organisations (secondary schools, Lyceum Technical College and Skarina University) and social welfare programmes (Gomel State Childrens' Centre). The opportunity for Trustees to meet with organisations and individuals and see the development of projects first-hand ensures that partnerships between the twin cities are effectively evaluated and continue to be supported. The delegation also intends to arrange for a civic meeting whilst in the city. Friends of Gomel hosted an official civic delegation from Gomel, which included the Chairperson, when delegates visited Aberdeen in June 2015 to celebrate the cities' 25th twinning anniversary. Maintaining civic relationships supports the twinning relationship on an official level – helping to gain Member support for projects and increasing awareness of the agreement through media.

Friends of Gomel will raise awareness of the twinning link and projects with Gomel on their return to Aberdeen. The delegates will give a report on their visit and their project to organisations connected with Gomel, including Twinning Aberdeen and Aberdeen Gomel Trust. They will also submit photos and articles for publication on the City Council's website, Friends of Gomel Newsletter and Aberdeen Council of Voluntary Organisation's E-bulletin.

Promoting the outcomes of this visit raises awareness of the charitable activities that Friends of Gomel undertake, creates an understanding of

the objectives of the charity and raises the profile of the projects which it supports. Travelling to Gomel enables Friends of Gomel to identify and target those most in need of financial and other assistance. The successful implementation of projects between the cities ensures the continued success and growth of the twinning arrangement between Aberdeen and Gomel.

This application seeks a total of £1,300 which will contribute towards the air fares and visas of the delegates. The delegates and hosts in Gomel will meet all other costs, including accommodation, airport transfers, food and translation services.

<b>Expenditure</b>	
Flights	£1,160
Accommodation	£660
Subsistence	£360
Internal Transport	£220
Visas	£360
<b>Total</b>	<b>£2,760</b>
<b>Income</b>	
Contribution from participants	£1,460
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,460</b>
Expenditure-Income	£2,760-1,460
<b>Total requested</b>	<b>£1,300</b>

**iii) Contribution of £6,000 towards Kincorth Academy hosting a school exchange programme with Regensburg's Albertus Magnus Gymnasium in Aberdeen, 4-9 October 2015**

Kincorth Academy established a partnership with Albertus Magnus Gymnasium in Regensburg last year. This year they will host a twin city school exchange with Albertus Magnus Gymnasium for the first time with teachers and pupils visiting Aberdeen this October. Pupils from Kincorth Academy are co-ordinating a programme which will expose their German counterparts to new cultural experiences as they participate in school activities and visit historic sites in the city. In doing so, they are provided with a unique experience in which they are acquiring communication and organisation skills essential for future employability.

A delegation of pupils and staff from Kincorth Academy visited Regensburg in October 2014 with the aim of developing a new twinning partnership between the two schools. Communications have been

ongoing throughout the year between pupils and staff which has culminated in plans for an annual exchange project. As Kincorth Academy visited Regensburg last year, they have extended an invitation to two teachers and ten pupils from Albertus Magnus Gymnasium to visit Aberdeen this October.

Whilst in Aberdeen, pupils from Regensburg will participate in the school day at Kincorth Academy - observing lessons and meeting peers throughout the school. The Kincorth Academy pupils who are directly involved in the exchange will create a social and cultural programme that complements the official school programme. This will ensure that their German counterparts gain a well-rounded experience of a young person's life in Aberdeen. The English and History Departments of the school are leading on the exchange. This will strongly influence the social programme as pupils from both schools will visit the historic and tourist areas of Old Aberdeen and Foot Dee as well as learning about more modern industrial history by touring the harbour.

From the initial exploratory visit to Regensburg last year, Kincorth Academy have instilled a sense of ownership of the exchange within pupils. Pupils have directly contributed to ideas for the programme and are fundraising to support activities undertaken whilst their peers are in Aberdeen. Cultivating such a programme provides young people from the city with a unique cultural experience and enables them with essential employability skills as they organise programmes and liaise with international peers.

The presence of German pupils at Kincorth Academy promotes the exchange and twinning relationship to pupils throughout the school, including those not directly involved in the exchange. This piques interest from younger pupils who are made aware of the opportunities that will be provided to them in future years by the exchange, encouraging them to think of themselves as 'global citizens'. Generating interest from younger pupils at this stage ensures that there is interest from them to make exchange sustainable in the future. Kincorth Academy are aware of the 'three-strikes' system which the International Twinning Grant operates are already exploring future funding opportunities through external bodies, such as UK-German Connection.

This application from Kincorth Academy seeks a contribution of £6,000 to support the accommodation, food, transport and activities of pupils from Albertus Magnus Gymnasium during their visit to Aberdeen in

October 2015. Stadt Regensburg will finance the groups travel to Aberdeen and pupils from both schools will fundraise to support activities.

<b>Expenditure</b>		
Flights		£6,000
Accommodation		£1,620
Subsistence		£2,880
Activities		£1,300
Internal transport		£500
<b>Total</b>		<b>£12,300</b>
<b>Income</b>		
Contribution from Stadt Regensburg		£6,000
Fundraising		£300
<b>Total</b>		<b>£6,300</b>
Expenditure-Income		£12,300-6,300
<b>Total requested</b>		<b>£6,000</b>

- iv) **Contribution of £2,940 towards the attendance of a civic delegation and music group from Stavanger at Aberdeen's annual Christmas Tree Light Switch-On Ceremony to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> twinning anniversary of the two cities, 26 November 2015**

The 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Aberdeen's twinning agreement with Stavanger takes place in 2015. A significant annual event which marks the cities' twinning is the gift of the Norwegian Christmas Tree by Stavanger to Aberdeen. A public event followed by civic reception to mark the occasion will take place during Aberdeen's Winter Festival in celebration of the tree and the anniversary. To enhance the event and officially commemorate the anniversary an invitation will be issued to the Mayor of Stavanger to attend and the presence of traditional musicians to perform at the event requested.

Several projects have been cultivated between organisations in Aberdeen and Stavanger in the 25 years since the cities signed a twinning agreement. Successful partnerships have been developed between organisations such as the Scouts and Jazz Festivals and business and economic links have been strengthened. A key symbolic partnership between the two cities is the Christmas Tree which Stavanger gifts to Aberdeen each November. The lighting of the Christmas Tree, based in the Castlegate area, is a popular event in the city's Winter Festival Programme which can attract an audience of up

to 1500 people to the city centre. Musicians entertain audiences and readings from local and Norwegian churches and civic dignitaries take place at the event.

It has been a long-standing tradition between Stavanger and Aberdeen that musical performers from Norway perform at the event. The presence of a Norwegian music group at the event will engage local audiences with different music traditions and raise the profile of Aberdeen's twinning links with Stavanger. The group have been asked to dress in traditional costume and will promote Norwegian customs and traditions in keeping with the festivities. As well as playing at the Christmas Tree Ceremony in the evening, the group will perform at various venues throughout the day such as city libraries and shopping centres to raise the profile of the twinning relationship to different audiences and promote the event with the aim of increasing audience figures that evening.

Following the event, a civic reception to mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Aberdeen and Stavanger's twinning is planned. The Mayor of Stavanger and up to two other dignitaries from Stavanger have been invited to attend the event and civic reception afterwards. Whilst in Aberdeen, a programme will be created for the Mayor which will also include visits to existing and prospective educational, cultural and economic partnerships and projects between the two cities. Extending an invitation to the Mayor of Stavanger to attend the Christmas Tree Light Switch-on Ceremony recognises the importance of town twinning activities and ensures that civic relations are maintained between the two cities.

Aberdeen and Stavanger share strong business and economic links and efforts continue to build more cultural and social links into the twinning and business partnership. An invitation to Stavanger to participate in the Christmas Tree Light Switch On will demonstrate our continued desire to work together and develop cultural and business links with their city. An extra £10,000 has been allocated to the International Twinning Budget this year to support such projects that celebrate significant twinning anniversaries.

The application requests a total of £2,940 to cover the cost of accommodation, food and transport of three civic dignitaries and up to five musicians whilst in Aberdeen. Stavanger Kommune and Greater Stavanger will cover the cost of air flights to and from Aberdeen.

<b>Expenditure</b>	
Flights	£3,200

Accommodation	£1,600
Subsistence	£740
Internal Transport	£400
Contingency	£200
<b>Total</b>	<b>£6,140</b>
<b>Income</b>	
Contribution from Stavanger Kommune and Greater Stavanger	£3,200
<b>Total</b>	<b>£3,200</b>
Expenditure-Income	£6,140-3,200
<b>Total requested</b>	<b>£2,940</b>

## 6. IMPACT

### *Aberdeen – the Smarter City*

- We will promote Aberdeen as a great place to live, bring up a family, do business and visit.
- We will ensure that Union Street regains its position as the heart of the city and move cultural activity centre-stage through re-invigorated cultural leadership.

### *Smarter Living (Quality of Life)*

- We aspire to be recognised as a City of Culture, a place of excellence for culture and arts by promoting Aberdeen as a cultural centre hosting high quality diverse cultural events for the whole community and beyond.

### *Smarter Economy (Competitiveness)*

- We will work with partners to promote the city as a place to invest, live, work and export from.

### *Community Plan*

- Work with other organisations, agencies and groups, including Visit Scotland and Visit Aberdeen, to encourage tourism and the provision of facilities for tourists.

Promoting and supporting international exchanges, involving various communities of interest, significantly contributes to Aberdeen City Council Vision as outlined above and to the actions of the Single Outcome Agreement. The outlined twinning projects also align with the cultural strategy vision as it allows for improved communication of cultural opportunities, helps with changing the perception of the city, to develop a stronger cultural identity and to have increased levels of effective partnership working.

Aberdeen's twin city partnership initiatives:

- Foster international understanding and friendship and an appreciation of cultural diversity;
  - Provide Aberdeen's citizens with an awareness of, and insight into, international issues and perspectives and their impact on Aberdeen and Scotland;
  - Promote the image and raise the profile of the city overseas;
- and
- Provide a forum for the exchange of knowledge, expertise, skills, ideas and best practice in any given field.

Opportunities for groups, communities and organisations to access twin city projects and exchanges and for possible sources of funding are advertised through the Council's website, press releases, school circulars where appropriate and the Aberdeen Council of Voluntary Organisations e-bulletin.

Human Rights, Equalities and Diversity: Aberdeen City Council has in place a range of statutory and discretionary plans, schemes and policies to promote equality. Officers endeavour to target groups and communities which have not previously had experience of international visits or exchanges, or have been under-represented in twin city activities. Applicants complete an equal opportunities monitoring form as part of the application process.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None used

9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

Laura Paterson  
Twinning & International Partnerships Officer  
[lapaterson@aberdeencity.gov.uk](mailto:lapaterson@aberdeencity.gov.uk)  
01224 523749