

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Finance, Policy & Resources
DATE	1 December 2016
DIRECTOR	Richard Ellis
TITLE OF REPORT	Twinning & International Partnerships
REPORT NUMBER	OCE/16/039
CHECKLIST COMPLETED	Yes

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to bring before Committee applications for financial assistance from the International Twinning Budget 2016-17 and to make recommendations.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- a) That Finance, Policy & Resources Committee approve the following grants from the International Twinning Budget 2016-17:
- i) Contribution of £500 towards a student from the University of Aberdeen undertaking a medical elective in Bulawayo, January-March 2017
 - ii) Contribution of £4,000 towards delegates from Aberdeen participating in a literary festival in Regensburg, March 10-13 2017

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Full council approved the International Twinning Budget for 2016-2017 of £137,250. The approved budget from the Common Good Fund provides £102,000 of monies towards the support of twinning projects and/or visits. Remaining funds support the infrastructure of the programme, such as salary and ICT costs. A total of £102,000 is available to support projects in 2016-17.

	Balance of budget available as at April 2016	£102,000
	Opening Balance	£10,459
i)	Contribution towards a student from the University of Aberdeen undertaking a medical elective in Bulawayo, January-March 2017	£500
ii)	Contribution towards delegates from Aberdeen participating in a literary festival in Regensburg, March 10-13 2017	£4,000
	TOTAL	£4,500
	Closing Balance (if recommendations approved)	£5,959

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 receives automatic updates with regards to situations in countries from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and is in close contact with counterpart officers in the twin cities to ensure information provided to participants is accurate and up-to-date. All travel guidance issued by the Twinning & International Partnerships Officer is based upon the advice of the FCO and local intelligence, such as the police and local government authorities. All individuals/groups who have been supported by the Twinning Grant must follow the advice of these authorities when visiting the twin cities, including changing travel or programme arrangements if required. If any of these authorities advice against travel to an area, then travel and the project must be postponed with immediate effect until it is deemed safe to continue.

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.

A review of the financial systems used to administer the Twinning Grant was undertaken in July 2016. As per recommendations in the Local Code for Practice (Approved FPR Committee September 2015), Following the Public Pound Tier 4 procedures are adhered to:

“Where annual funding is less than £15,000, an officer may still chose to follow the procedures laid down for Tier 4, as although the level of funding does not fall within the following the public pound guidance, the level of risk may be such that it would be prudent to follow these procedures.”

Following this review, existing measures were strengthened and new practices implemented to ensure that the Twinning Grant is fully accountable in its allocation of the public pound.

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

- a) These recommendations involve the allocation of funds made available from the 2016-17 budget:
- i) **Contribution of £500 towards a student from the University of Aberdeen undertaking a medical elective in Bulawayo, January-March 2017**

A medical student from Aberdeen intends to undertake a medical elective in Bulawayo at the beginning of 2017. Based within United Bulawayo Hospital, this elective builds upon existing relations between maternity hospitals in Bulawayo and organisations in Aberdeen. The elective will be research based and upon return to Aberdeen the applicant will engage local audiences with their findings and experience using a variety of channels. The applicant has been awarded a grant from the University of Aberdeen and is seeking a similar level of support from Aberdeen City Council to contribute towards travel costs associated with the trip.

The University of Aberdeen's Immpact Project supports maternal healthcare care and provisions in developing countries. In 2015, members of the group created an exchange programme with professionals from Bulawayo allowing professionals from both cities to travel to the other city and share knowledge and experience with peers. This initial exchange has resulted in the development of an arts in healthcare project between various organisations in Aberdeen and United Bulawayo Hospital. Public events associated with the Immpact project have also helped raise awareness of the twinning relationship to new city audiences.

Supported by Immpact, a fifth year medical student from the University intends to undertake a medical elective Bulawayo. Mentored by staff

within United Bulawayo Hospital's Obstetrics and Gynaecology Department, the student will spend two months on a research project in Bulawayo. The project will explore the high maternal death rate in Bulawayo. This will be in the form of qualitative interviews with service users surrounding the issues of transport and accessibility to medical healthcare provisions. The student is experienced in volunteering with global health organisations in developing countries and will adhere to the advice and guidance of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

A report detailing the elective will be written and circulated to interested parties, including the University of Aberdeen and Aberdeen-Bulawayo Trust. Experiences will be shared to students through University social media channels and presented to local audiences at a Pecha Kucha event organised by the University to highlight research work. The findings will also be shared with staff at Aberdeen Maternity Hospital to highlight issues surrounding maternal global healthcare issues.

This project continues to build upon a recently developed relationship between maternal healthcare and associated organisations in Aberdeen and Bulawayo. Assisting local audiences with professional and personal development is key to the Shaping Aberdeen 'Our Purpose, Our People' vision. Enabling this project continues to develop relations between medical organisations in Aberdeen and Bulawayo.

The student has received a grant of £500 from the University of Aberdeen's Hospital Saturday Travel Fund and is seeking match funding from Aberdeen City Council's Twinning Grant to support travel costs to Bulawayo. All other costs will be met through personal contribution and hospitality in Bulawayo.

Expenditure	
Flights	£850
Accommodation	£400
Food Costs	£200
Visa	£35
Total	£1,485
Income	
Grant from University of Aberdeen	£500
Personal contribution	£485
Total	£985
Expenditure-Income	£1,485-£985
Total Applying For	<u>£500</u>

ii) Contribution of £4,000 towards delegates from Aberdeen participating in a literary festival in Regensburg, March 10-13 2017

Arts and education organisations in Regensburg are planning a literary festival next year which will celebrate Bavarian and Scottish culture. The organisers have approached Aberdeen City Council to seek support for the travel costs of up to ten representatives from Aberdeen to participate

in this event. If successful, groups and individuals from the local literary scene as well as traditional music and crafts will be invited to attend.

‘Aye!’ is a Bavarian-Scottish Festival of Literature which will take place in Regensburg in March 2017. It is organised by a range of stakeholders including the Association of German Writers in Bavaria, Protestant Centre for Adult Education and independent bookshop Bucherwurm. This is the third international literary festival hosted by the city with previous festivals in 2013 and 2015 celebrating Czech and Turkish literature. To celebrate Regensburg’s twinning relationship with Aberdeen the theme for next year’s festival will focus Bavarian and Scottish literary traditions and cultures.

The three-day festival will take place in various venues throughout Regensburg. The programme will include readings by authors, presentations from experts, concerts, arts and crafts workshops and a children’s programme. The aim of the programme is to engage local audiences with traditions of the area as well as celebrating the twinning relationship with Aberdeen and raising awareness of Scottish culture. The programmed events are intended to be entertaining and accessible to appeal to as wide an audience as possible.

To enhance the festival the organisers have requested the presence of up to ten representatives from Aberdeen to participate at various events over the weekend. A group from Regensburg travelled to Aberdeen in August 2016 to meet with several organisations in the city involved in organising similar public engagement programmes in the city, including Aberdeen City Libraries, Scottish Culture & Traditions and the WORD Centre for Creative Writing. Based on recommendation from these organisations, they have created a list of representatives who they wish to invite which includes writers, musicians and experts on local traditions.

The presence of an Aberdeen delegation at this event promotes the city as a tourist destination to international audiences, as it celebrates Scottish traditions in a fun and informal setting. It continues to strengthen and enhance the twinning relationship between Aberdeen and Regensburg as it is a celebration of the cultures of the different cities. It also provides a platform for local professionals to engage with peers from a different country, encouraging knowledge sharing and future collaboration. If successful, the festival could be recreated in Aberdeen as organisers of similar programmes in Aberdeen are in contact with the Regensburg consortium and have actively collaborated on the festival programme. Supporting the attendance of delegates from Aberdeen at this festival promotes the Shaping Aberdeen vision of ‘Our Culture, Our People’ and ‘Our Culture, Our Place’ as it provides an international platform for writers

and performers to exhibit their work and promotes the city to international audiences.

Organisations from Regensburg, including Stadt Regensburg and the Association of Writers, have confirmed financial support of the project. The organisers have requested financial assistance from Aberdeen City Council towards the travel costs of the group from Aberdeen. All other costs associated with their visit, including accommodation and subsistence, will be met by the festival. This application recommends a budget of £4,000 be allocated to contribute towards travel costs from Aberdeen to Regensburg.

Expenditure	
Flights	£4,000
Accommodation	£3,000
Food Costs	£750
Internal transport	£500
Total	£8,250
Income	
Contribution from Festival	£4,250
Total	£4,250
Expenditure-Income	£8,250-4,250
Total Applying For	£4,000

6. IMPACT

Improving Customer Experience –

Twinning & International Partnerships supports the principles of the Common Good Fund:

- Upholding the dignity of the City: The expense of civic ceremonies; and of the provision of suitable hospitality on appropriate occasions and for appropriate persons, and guests would fall under this purpose;
- Any other purpose which, in the bona fide and reasonable judgement of the Council, is for the good of the community as a whole, or in which the inhabitants at large may share: to be distinguished from the separate interest or benefit of any particular individual or group of people, however deserving or needy.

Improving Staff Experience –

The Twinning and International Partnerships Officer works closely with internal departments to create partnerships and projects between Aberdeen City Council and twin cities, regularly working with the Education, City Events and Civic Teams amongst others.

Improving our use of Resources –

The International Twinning Grant is funded through the Common Good Fund. Recommendations for grant allocations are presented to council committee and all reports detailing grant allocations are readily available through the council website. Twinning & International Partnerships will be reviewed in 2016-17.

Corporate -

Promoting and supporting international exchanges, involving various communities of interest, significantly contributes to Aberdeen City Council's Smarter City Vision 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.

Public –

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.

7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

Twinning & International Partnerships upholds the principles of the Common Good Fund. The cessation of the programme could result in failure to 'uphold the dignity of the city' and a breakdown in projects 'which are good for the community as a whole'.

Should this diverse and engaging programme not continue, then Aberdeen could potentially cease to be an attractive destination for visitors and local residents with economic spend being distributed elsewhere in Scotland and international partnerships could be at risk.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None used.

9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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