

Agenda Item	7
Report No	CIA/61/15

**Inverness Town Twinning Committee – Action and Financial Plan for 2016**

**Report by Inverness City Area Manager**

**Summary**

Inverness Town Twinning Committee (ITTC) exists to give substance to the Council's long-established policy commitment to maintain town twinning partnerships and activity programmes with Augsburg, St Valery and La Baule.

These three civic partners have very different community profiles and the twinning relationships have differing and fluctuating emphasis. Forward planning of activity is not straightforward, calling for budgetary planning that combines a blend of commitment and discretionary flexibility. Proposals currently under discussion indicate that 2016 could be a busy year.

This paper reviews activity prospects and presents proposals and budget requirements, which the Council is now invited to consider and approve.

**1. Background**

- 1.1 Inverness has long standing town-twinning partnerships with Augsburg (since 1956), La Baule (1981) and St Valery (1987) – committed international relationships that were entered into by previous Councils. For many years, the Council has delegated the management and implementation of these relationships to the Inverness Town Twinning Committee (ITTC). The Committee comprises 18 members, of whom 6 are appointed by Highland Council and 12 elected at a public meeting. Its funding is provided exclusively by the Council on the basis of regular submissions such as this.
- 1.2 The general aims and objectives of the town twinning movement are to promote friendship, better mutual understanding and social, cultural and commercial exchange between the partners. This was initially intended to help post-war reconciliation and social reconstruction, but has evolved over time into an informal network and process for forging better pan-European education, understanding and social and commercial relationships at the grass roots level.
- 1.3 There is strong anecdotal evidence in Inverness of success in fulfilling these aims: as successive generations of school children, students and apprentices, sportsmen, musicians, youth organisations and other civic groups have enriched their lives and broadened their horizons through their international experiences. Tangible evidence of commercial benefits is harder to identify

and impossible to quantify, although mutual promotion of tourism is a constant theme.

1.4 The activities of ITTC fall into the following general categories:

- Maintaining established contacts and ongoing activities of inter-community exchange. (Including liaison with equivalent civic organisations and officials in partner towns, and fostering such regular activities as: inter-school exchanges and visits; inter-college work placements; reciprocal tourism publicity, etc.)
- Promoting and encouraging new activities (recent examples include: inter-university co-operation; football tournament; art exhibition; inter-school quiz)
- Providing grant assistance to community groups - primarily for outbound travel, but occasionally for in-bound visitor hospitality (recent examples include Highland Rugby Club and Culloden Rotary to La Baule; IRA to Augsburg.)
- Arranging civic exchanges/group visits involving elected members, officials and citizen groups.

1.5 The level of twinning activity varies from year to year, and is not always very predictable. ITTC 's policy is to maintain a small budget to cater for routine demands or minor new initiatives, which currently stands at about £2,000. The past three years have been comparatively quiet in terms of major projects, but 2016 promises to be considerably busier.

## **2. Augsburg**

2.1 Augsburg is the largest twin partner (pop. 270,000) and the most significant in terms of commercial strength (MAN, Seimens, KUKA, etc), education and research (2 universities), cultural heritage and overall civic capability. They have maintained the longest and strongest commitment to the twinning process with Inverness, of which 2016 will be the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

2.2 To mark that milestone, the city of Augsburg has invited the Provost, a small civic deputation to include the Inverness City Manager or a Ward Manager and the Civic and Facilities Team Leader – who will have a role in being the parties 'official Piper' and a citizen group from Inverness to attend commemorative activities in Augsburg in the period 8-11 May. This is in reciprocity for Inverness having hosted activities to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2006.

2.3 With the commemorative activities as a centrepiece, Augsburg also plan to hold a 'European Week' from 3-11 May, with a strong Scottish theme and they have requested some advice and help in putting together a Scottish programme, which would be undertaken by members of the visiting Inverness citizens group. Tourism promotion would be a strong item.

- 2.4 A promising new theme in the Augsburg relationship arises from efforts to forge collaborative dialogues between UHI and Augsburg's two universities. These are at an early stage, but the President of the Augsburg technological university recently visited Inverness for a cordial and constructive first meeting, and a professor from UHI has been invited to Augsburg to give a conference speech about UHI's experience in multi-campus operation and distributed learning.
- 2.5 The cost to Inverness of involvement in the May events will depend upon their final shape and the number of travelling participants. The established protocol for such visits is that the guests meet their travelling costs, while hosts provide accommodation, meals, local activities and associated hospitality. It is intended to limit the citizens' group to twenty people were, for which the ITTC grant contribution to their travel costs would amount to £1,250. The official civic deputation would incur travel costs at an estimated cost to the Council of (£1,000). Accommodation and meals for the official party would be provided by Augsburg, while hospitality for citizen visitors would be provided gratis by local families, organised by their twinning committee. It is customary for these host families to be rewarded with a concluding meal and social event along with their guests.
- 2.6 In the context of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary, it is also proposed that Dr Gribl, the mayor of Augsburg, be reciprocally invited to visit Inverness with an equivalent small official party and citizen group later in the year. Personal relationships are the essential heart of town twinning activities, and civic heads have a key role. Dr Gribl has been positive and supportive, but has not yet been able to visit Inverness to consolidate his understanding and involvement. So it is now proposed that the Provost send a formal invitation to Dr Gribl for a four-day visit by a 3-4 person civic group to coincide with the Kirking of the Council and Tattoo in September. It is also proposed that the ITTC invite its counterpart, Augsburg International, to send an accompanying citizen group of 15-20 visitors, who would be accommodated by host families.
- 2.7 The cost implication for the Council would be to provide hotel accommodation for four nights and an evening civic dinner at an estimated cost of (£5,500). ITTC would organise host accommodation, provide other meals, transport, and local activities, at an estimated cost to ITTC of (£6,750).
- 2.8 It is important that the principle of accepting the invitation to visit Augsburg in May and to extend a reciprocal invitation to come to Inverness in September is determined as soon as possible so that plans and preparations can be progressed.

### **3. St Valery-en-Caux**

- 3.1 St Valery is the smallest of the twinning partners (pop. 5,000), but the one with the strongest emotional ties - that were forged through the dreadful wartime experiences shared with the 51<sup>st</sup> Highland Division in 1940. Located near Dieppe on the Channel coast in a rich agricultural area, it is a busy seaside resort and fishing port with a large nuclear power plant nearby.

- 3.2 Communication between Inverness and St Valery dwindled during the last two years following an abrupt change in their civic administration, and only picked up again with the appointment of a new town twinning committee earlier this year. Provost Graham and a small civic group from Inverness participated in ceremonies in early June to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the military debacle of 1940. The commemorative events (involving no less than nine memorial ceremonies) were impressively organised with great dignity and genuine warmth towards the Inverness representation. In the course of the weekend it was possible to establish good working relationships with the new mayoress and officials and their energetic twinning committee, all of whom are enthusiastic about rekindling twinning activity.
- 3.3 To confirm this renewed commitment, Provost Carmichael invited the mayoress and a small civic group to visit Inverness in early September to participate in the Kirking of the Council, familiarise themselves with Inverness and plan future exchange activities. Unfortunately the French party was obliged to cancel the visit, and it is unlikely that will be practical to reschedule during 2016. Efforts to promote exchange activity will continue by correspondence, but the budget requirement for 2016 is likely to be small.

#### **4.0 La Baule**

- 4.1 La Baule is a fashionable high-class seaside resort in south Brittany, whose prime feature is a splendid eight-mile beach. It has a normal population of 16,000 that swells to about twice that number in the tourist season.
- 4.2 It has had a long and active twinning partnership with Inverness (involving schools, sports clubs, musicians and mixed groups) of which 2016 will mark the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Inverness has been invited to send a group to La Baule next summer to mark the anniversary, but given the foreseen level of twinning activity with Augsburg, this initiative is unlikely to be practical. Well-established 'normal' exchanges between schools and other organisations will continue, with an estimated ITTC budget requirement of £2,500

#### **5. Budget Requirement**

- 5.1 If the Council agrees that the proposed activities for 2016 described in this paper should be progressed, ITTC will require an additional budget for the purpose and there will also be cost implications for the Council for travel and providing civic hospitality.

Possible (£)	Spend	Cost to ITTC	Cost to Council
Augsburg New Initiatives: May outbound		£1,250	£1,000
Sept. inbound		£6,750	£5,500
St Valery New Initiatives:		-	-
La Baule New Initiatives:		-	-
'Normal' activities and administration		£3,000	-
<b>Total Possible Spend</b>		<b>£11,000</b>	<b>£6,500</b>
Existing Reserve Funds		£2,000	-
Projected New Budget Requirement		£9,000	£6,500

5.2 Historically, ITTC has received an annual budget from the Council of £5,000. As activity forecasting is very difficult, this has frequently led to under or overspending, but usually evens out over a 4-5 year period.

5.3 Expenditure by ITTC on twinning projects during the past 4 years shows a fluctuating pattern:

	£
2016	10,500 (est. Augsburg plus £2.5K 'normal')
2015	3,175
2014	3,617
2013	2,020
2012	7,292
<b>5 year average</b>	<b>5,320</b>

5.4 No funding request was made to the Council for 2014-15, because activity levels had been low for some time and a higher than usual surplus had accumulated. This has now been reduced to a normal level. The present budget request therefore represents a 'catch-up' situation for a coming year of exceptionally high activity. It is proposed that the Council meets this funding requirement by providing the normal £5,000 budget to ITTC for each of the two financial years 2015-16 and 2016-17.

5.6 ITTC maintains a modest financial reserve of £2,000, which is required to cover administration, unexpected initiatives and contingencies.

## 6.0 Implications

6.1 Financial – There are funds within the Town Twinning budget within the Common Good Fund Revenue budget for allocation for a grant of £5,000 to the ITTC. The balance of the request (£4,000) could be drawn from the budget for 2016/17 to be agreed at the City of Inverness Area Committee likely to be set for 5 March 2016. The only commitment to be met directly by the Council from the 2015.16 Twinning Budget would be the cost of Air Fares which, if approved, would be booked as soon as possible. The Civic Dinner planned for the visit by Mayor Gribl and his party to the City of Inverness would be the subject of an application to the Grants Sub Committee in the usual way

- 6.2 Legal – there are no known implications
- 6.3 Equalities – the arrangements will meet the criteria set by the Councils Policies
- 6.4 Climate Change/ Carbon Clever – there are no known implications
- 6.5 Risk – there are no known risk implications

**Recommendations:**

It is recommended that the Committee;

1. approve a budget allocation to the Inverness Town Twinning Committee of £5,000 from the 2015-16 Inverness Common Good Fund Twinning Budget,
2. approve an allocation of £1,000 from the 2015/16 Twinning budget and that the Provost, the City Area Manager or a Ward Manager and the Civic and Facilities Team Leader accept an invitation to visit Augsburg as detailed in the report
3. Agree to the Provost extending an invitation to the Mayor of Augsburg as detailed in the report including agreement to the estimated costs and;
4. Note that a further £4,000 will require to be allocated from the 2016-17 Twinning budget to the ITTC, and that an application will be made for a Civic Dinner in respect of the Visit by the Mayor of Augsburg set for 2016

Designation: Inverness City Area Manager

Date: 7 November 2015

Background Papers:

### Basis of Budget Formulation

#### 1. Outbound visit to Augsburg (May)

- Official group of 4, Citizen group of 20.
- Accommodation provided. Travel cost estimate £1,250 for Official Group, and £1,200 in ITTC grant support to Citizen Group.

#### 2. Inbound visit to Inverness (September)

- Visiting party: Official group of 4, Citizen group of 20.
- Programme:
  - Thurs – arrive; meet hosts
  - Fri - local sightseeing; Civic Dinner
  - Sat – sightseeing; Tattoo
  - Sun: Kirking; time with hosts
  - Mon – Free time; sightseeing; Ceilidh
  - Tues: Depart
- Accommodation: official group in a hotel (by Council, est. £2,000). Citizens group hosted by families.
- Meals: Civic dinner by Council for visitors and ITTC (est. £3,000). 3 lunches for whole party (est. £1,250). Ceilidh (est. £1,500)
- Activities: Inverness Castle; Loch Ness Cruise; Tattoo; Culloden, etc. (est. £1,750)
- Transport: coach to collect both groups at airport; scenic trips; local travel (est. £1,750)
- Gifts: Commemorative item; small personal items. (est. £500)