

COUNCIL MEETING – 6TH DECEMBER, 2018

AGENDA ITEM NO.5 (2)

INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL AND BUSINESS LINKS

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

This report provides an overview of the background to town twinning and the arrangements in Rushmoor. The links with the twin towns of Meudon and Oberursel in particular remain strong and active.

Over the last 10-15 years the Borough has experienced significant social and economic changes. In considering these, the potential for establishing new cultural and business links with other areas has been examined.

As a result, and following consultation with the Town Twinning Association, the Cabinet is asked to **RECOMMEND THE COUNCIL** to agree to:

- (i) Seek to establish cultural and business links with the following places:
 - Gorkha Municipality, Nepal
 - Rzeszow, Poland
 - Dayton, Ohio, United States
- (ii) Authorise the Chief Executive and Head of Democracy, Strategy and Partnerships to make the necessary arrangements to establish the formal links in consultation with the Leader of the Council.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Town twinning has been in existence in Britain for nearly 100 years, although it only really became established after the Second World War. This was part of a wider aim to bring communities together and to promote reconciliation. During the 1970's and 1980's, town twinning developed rapidly between British and European towns (especially France and Germany) and local authorities had greater freedom to determine with whom they would twin and the nature of the twinning. It was from the 1990's that twinning links started to develop outside of Europe where areas with multicultural communities with a high proportion of people from a specific region, sought to increase cultural considerations and awareness to help promote social cohesion.

- 1.2 Town twinning has continued over time and is still very much in existence today albeit on a somewhat reduced scale. An increasing trend has been to move away from formal, long term, partnerships to those that are less formal and prescribed but are endorsed by a friendship agreement or memorandum of understanding.
- 1.3 There is no formal cultural or statutory definition of town twinning and it can come in many forms. There is no statutory requirement or provisions relating to town twinning or friendship links and local authorities can determine what any relationship would involve. As a result, Rushmoor has assessed its own arrangements and considered the implication of recent social and economic changes in the Borough.

2. RUSHMOOR'S LINKS

2.1 Rushmoor currently twins with the following European towns/cities:

- Meudon, France – since 1974
- Oberursel, Germany – since 1989
- Sulechów, Poland – since 2001

2.2 The twinning arrangements with Meudon and Oberursel have been productive and valuable since they were established. At certain times relationships have been quieter but generally the educational, cultural and voluntary group links have been very positive. For many years the arrangements have been managed by the Rushmoor Town Twinning Association entirely independently of the Council. In 2019, Rushmoor and Oberursel will be celebrating 30 years of the association and it is intended that representatives of both towns will be in attendance at the Mayor's Banquet and Ball on 8th March, 2019.

3. NEW CULTURAL AND BUSINESS LINKS

3.1 The Borough has developed and changed over the past 15 years and there is an opportunity to reflect this in links with cities/towns in other parts of the world. Two of the significant changes are:

- Development of Aerospace Industries – Since Farnborough Airport moved to civilian use there has been a gradual growth in associated industries near the Airport and in Farnborough. The companies located here include BAE Systems, Leonardo, Weston, Flight Safety, Boeing and Qinetiq. The recent announcement that Gulfstream will be moving its UK headquarters here is also very positive for Farnborough and makes it more attractive to complementary businesses in this country and abroad.
- Increase in the Nepalese population – The Nepalese community has a strong presence in the Borough because of the Gurkha connection with the Aldershot Garrison (the Queens Own Gurkha Logistic Regiment is still there). Since 2008, the number of Nepali residents in Rushmoor has

increased significantly and it is likely that up to 10% of the population is of Nepalese origin. The Council has undertaken a significant amount of work to manage the process of integration and to promote community cohesion. The Nepalese community are now a key part of Rushmoor life.

3.2 As a result of these changes, Cabinet Members, in conjunction with other local organisations, such as Farnborough Aerospace Consortium, have been exploring the potential of establishing links with other places to help develop mutual understanding and promote opportunities for cultural and business connections to benefit both Rushmoor and the other areas. As a result, it is proposed to seek international links with the following places:

- (i) **Gorkha Municipality** – This is located within the Gorkha district and lies some 140km north west of Kathmandu with a population of approximately 40,000. During October, the Nepalese Ambassador made an informal visit to Rushmoor to discuss the potential for the link which he felt would sit very comfortably with Gorkha as the name reflects the brave soldiers that have moved from there to serve in the British Army. He considered that the link would offer great potential for joint learning and referred especially to democracy, education, technology and culture. It was clear that Rushmoor was a key place to establish an association and would provide inspiration for the Gorkha community.

Developing the link and obtaining the necessary approvals would be co-ordinated through the Nepalese Ambassador who would like to take a personal interest. It is understood that the local Nepalese community is excited by the prospect of establishing a link. The link would be legitimised by a memorandum of understanding signed at a formal ceremony.

- (ii) **Dayton, Ohio** – The development of a link with Dayton, Ohio is very much driven by aerospace and associated businesses. Ohio's geographic location has proved to be an asset for economic growth and expansion. Because Ohio links the Northwest to the Midwest, much cargo and business traffic passes through its borders along its well-developed highways.

Dayton is a city in western Ohio and is noted for its association with aviation. Not only is it the birth place of Orville Wright but it is home to the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force, with a vast collection of aircraft, from early 1900s planes to a space shuttle exhibit. Carillon Historical Park contains a Wright Brothers plane.

The Dayton region gave birth to aviation and is known for its high concentration of aerospace and aviation technology. In 2009, the Governor designated Dayton as Ohio's aerospace innovation hub, the state's first such technology hub. Two major United States' research and development organisations have leveraged Dayton's historical leadership in aviation and maintain their headquarters at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. Wright-Patterson Air Force Base is one of the

Air Force's largest air base wings. In addition, state officials are working to make the Dayton region a hub and a leader for Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) research and manufacturing.

Farnborough Aerospace Consortium already have links with the British American Chamber of Commerce in Ohio to enhance the regions' SME communities knowledge and business opportunities. Indeed, Ohio came to the Farnborough Air Show 2018 as exhibitors.

Because of the strong aerospace influence in Dayton there is a natural link to Farnborough - the "Cradle of British Aviation". It would be a natural progression to get a stronger link between the two regions especially as the regional Aerospace Trade Association located within the Council Offices is an ideal platform to build relations and business opportunities.

Having given careful consideration to the opportunity and informal contacts having been made with the City Mayor, who seems enthusiastic about the potential collaboration. It is therefore proposed that Rushmoor seeks to establish a link with Dayton.

- (iii) **Rzeszow, Poland** – Rzeszow lies in the Podkarpackie region of south east Poland which has boundaries with the Ukraine and Slovakia. The city forms a central part of an area known as Aviation Valley which has been a centre for aviation since before the Second World War. Rzeszow is the biggest city in the region and the aviation industry developed following foreign investment attracted by a supply of relatively cheap, skilled labour and a range of small aviation orientated businesses. There is an association of aviation factories there, with over 100 manufacturers, with other business associations and educational institutions. A significant amount of complementary development in the area is taking place. 90% of Poland's aviation industry is concentrated in the area with employment in the sector around 24,000. There are fourteen large international companies in Aviation Valley, including Pratt and Whitney and Safran. There are also a significant number of companies producing complex parts for the industry.

Businesses in the region already have contacts in the Rushmoor area and an informal discussion with the Deputy Head of the Department of Promotion and International Co-operation has shown a strong willingness to develop a link. The link would be focussed around business, education and culture.

Given the potential business links and the aerospace connections it is proposed that a link with Rzeszow is progressed. This business and educational link would be subject to a memorandum of understanding.

- 3.3 If the Council approves the establishment of these links the next stage will be to make formal contact with the towns. Subject to the outcome of the contacts

the development of the links will proceed. Subject to there being agreement, arrangements will be made to formalise the links in Spring 2019.

4. ROLE OF THE TOWN TWINNING ASSOCIATION

- 4.1 The Town Twinning Association has been consulted on the proposals to develop the links with Gorkha, Dayton and Rzeszow. The Association is broadly in agreement with the new arrangements.
- 4.2 The Association is currently undertaking a review of its working arrangements and Constitution and will be taking the proposals into account in doing this. The Association has a Co-ordinator who is paid for by the Council, although that is the only support given by Rushmoor. If the Council approves the links, further discussions will be held with the Association on how the links will be supported.

5. IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSED LINKS

- 5.1 The nature of the proposed links will not place any specific responsibilities on the Council. In terms of the Council's priorities, the proposals support the work towards developing a centre of excellence for aerospace and initiatives to foster civic pride, improve cohesion and increase community engagement.
- 5.2 There are no legal implications as such links are not underpinned by statute. There are no other implications although a one-off bid will be submitted for 2019/20 to meet the cost of setting up the links. The potential business, education and cultural links will add value to the prosperity of the Borough.

6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The continuing development of Farnborough as an aerospace centre and the Nepalese becoming integrated as part of the Rushmoor community has presented opportunities to develop further links with cities/towns which complement Rushmoor. The links will involve a memorandum of understanding but will not have the formality of a traditional town twinning arrangement.

D.E. CLIFFORD
LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

None