

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - RESOURCES

28 JANUARY 2004

EXECUTIVE

16 FEBRUARY 2004

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION STRATEGY

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval to an International Cooperation Strategy which sets out a way forward for the Council's future twinning activity and international relations, and provides a framework for the work undertaken by the community-led twinning groups.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council's twinning function was reviewed in 2001/2002 as part of the Best Value review of Civics and Mayoralty. The review concluded that the changing nature of trans national relationships had produced a pressing need to re-define the nature and direction of twinning. In September 2002, this committee resolved that twinning activities should continue at both civic and community levels, but a strategic plan should be prepared, incorporating the following objectives and proposals:

- ❑ The need to redefine the purpose and objectives of twinning activity, to ensure that the wider interests of the city and partner organisations are met.
- ❑ Objectives should be outcome focused.
- ❑ The need to steer and prioritise twinning activities at both civic and community levels.
- ❑ Communications with the present twin cities should be initiated to establish their views, and their future objectives for twinning links with Exeter.
- ❑ Recognition that, rather than abandonment, low level maintenance of the links with Exeter's twin towns may be appropriate in order to continue "bonhomie", and to maintain a platform for potential future activity.
- ❑ A review of the funding arrangements for the community-led twinning associations which shows a positive commitment to community twinning through dedicated funding and secures activity which meets the Council's objectives.
- ❑ The need to explain that the Council's overall position statement is not to enter in to any additional open-ended twinning arrangements. This would not preclude short-term projects or initiatives that would benefit the social or economic well-being of the recipient city, e.g. humanitarian aid with developing countries.

- Future civic twinning visits should be based upon clear purposes, with defined objectives and outcomes established prior to the visit. The same principles should apply to invitations to twin cities visiting Exeter.

3. PROPOSAL

- 3.1 The International Cooperation Strategy (attached at Appendix 1) has been prepared in response to the findings of the Best Value review and sets out a framework for future work with international partners, including twin towns. The strategy also sets out clear priorities for funding of the Exeter Twinning Circle and Exeter Yaroslavl Twinning Association through a dedicated budget and service level agreements.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 In recent years, the Council's twinning activity, including inward and outward civic visits, has been covered by an annual budget of £5,000. At present it is not considered necessary to increase this amount.
- 4.2 To date, the Exeter Twinning Circle and the Exeter Yaroslavl Twinning Association have applied for funding from the Grants Committee on an annual basis. In recent years the amounts awarded have been £2,500 and £1,500 respectively. From 2004/2005 it is proposed that this funding is allocated from the twinning budget and linked to service level agreements. Whilst proportionate to this level of funding, these agreements will be negotiated annually and will support the objectives of the International Cooperation Strategy. Progress reports will be referred to the Head of Corporate Customer Services and any requests for additional funding will be determined in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Best Value and Human Resources.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That Scrutiny Committee-Resources support the proposal and that the Executive approve the International Cooperation Strategy

Originator: Bruce Luxton, Policy Officer

DIRECTOR CORPORATE SERVICES

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)
Background papers used in compiling this report:
Local Government International Bureau (2001) *'The Links Effect'*