

**RESIDENTS' AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES  
POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE**

**2010/11**

**REVIEW SCOPING REPORT**

**A review of Hillingdon's Town Twinning relationships**

- 1. Are there any benefits to Hillingdon residents in maintaining the current town twinning relationships?**
- 2. Are there any benefits to residents in Hillingdon being twinned to a similar sized local authority overseas?**

**Aim of review**

A review into the current arrangements Hillingdon has in place with the existing three twin towns. To assess the value and benefit of the arrangements provided to Hillingdon residents and to consider the benefits that twinning with a similar size authority overseas may bring.

**Terms of Reference**

1. To understand the background to the current twinning arrangements.
2. To examine current practice, level and range of activities organised with the twin towns.
3. To investigate current town twinning practice in neighbouring Local Authorities.
4. To examine current use of resources and costs associated with town twinning activities to determine value for money.
5. To investigate potential benefits that could be gained by linking Hillingdon with a similar size borough overseas.
6. To report to Cabinet recommendations based upon outcomes of the review.

**Reasons for the review**

The review provides an opportunity to examine the benefits to Hillingdon residents of the current organisational arrangements the Council has in place with the three twin towns and what benefits there would be in establishing an alternative arrangement with a similar sized authority overseas

This review would include the current co-ordination of the programme, value for money of the range of activities organised, if these arrangements should continue and, if so, whether they should be in the current format or be revised.

The review will examine the scope of current twinning activities and any benefits to Hillingdon residents there may be to expand this to other sectors, potentially including more arts related activities, professional / training opportunities, business links and programmes to address common issues such as health, community safety, civic pride, music events, town centre management and economic development.

If twinning arrangements are considered beneficial to Hillingdon residents, the review will consider if the formation of a new forum with an agreed level of member involvement would offer the opportunity to improve and expand current delivery, potentially including additional arrangements with another similar sized authority overseas and if co-ordination by the Sport & Leisure team continues to offer the best option to ensure that a well balanced programme is organised.

Town twinning activities usually require either paying for foreign travel or if hosting events, organising hospitality and accommodation. This includes official visits and events involving local groups and schools etc. While expenditure for these is controlled via normal approval processes there are currently no set protocols in place to agree and define the appropriate levels of resources allocated to each event.

### **Who is this review covering?**

1. Local clubs, schools and other organisations (including Uxbridge and District Scouts) that have taken part in recent events and activities as part of the town twinning arrangements
2. Council Members that have been involved with town twinning activities.
3. Council services including the Sport & Leisure team, Arts Service, School Improvement Service and Youth and Connexions Team

### **Key issues**

1. **Are there any benefits to Hillingdon residents in maintaining the current town twinning relationships?**
2. **Are there any benefits to residents in Hillingdon being twinned to a similar sized local authority overseas?**

### **Methodology**

1. The Policy and Overview Committee is to ask for responses to the two questions above via an email questionnaire sent to:
  - Youth service
  - Arts Service
  - Francoise Allen - Primary Modern Foreign Languages Advisor

Whilst designed to obtain responses to the two key questions, the questionnaires may differ

2. To invite the following representatives that have been involved in town twinning projects to make written (email) responses;

- **Cllr. Josephine Barrett**
- **Cllr. George Cooper**
- **Cllr. Shirley Harper-O'Neill**
- **Howard Griffin** – Leisure Officer (Responsible for Co-Ordination of town twinning)
- **John Arnold** – District Commissioner Uxbridge Scouts
- **Chris Head** – Head of Modern Foreign Languages, Uxbridge High School
- **Tony Docherty** – Ruislip Rangers Football Club
- **Francoise Allen** – Modern Foreign Languages Advisor, School Improvement Service

### **Relevant Documents**

Town Twinning activity programme and costs for 2009/10 and 2010/11.

### **Outcome**

Recommendations to Cabinet.

### **Proposed timeframe & milestones:**

<b>Meeting Date</b>	<b>Work Programme</b>
22 September 2010	Committee to agree review scoping report
Via Email	Distribution of questions / invitations to comment
Via Email	Conclusions and recommendations
14 December 2010	Committee to agree final report

### **Background Information**

#### **1. Introduction to twinning**

The Preamble to the Treaty of Rome states that member states of the European Community are determined to lay the foundations of a close union amongst the peoples of Europe. To meet that objective of bringing citizens closer together, the European Commission introduced a programme to support twinning schemes as a valuable way of involving people and their elected representatives. The basis on which twinning proposals can be developed includes objectives for the development of co-operation between the communities involved as well as cultural exchanges, the promotion of tourism, artistic, musical, sporting, educational, economic and industrial projects.

The purpose of twinning is to develop relationships between linked municipalities, to share approaches and experiences in relation to local governance and the development of civic pride, to encourage communication

and exchange visits between citizens and organisations within the communities.

An Oath was taken and signed in 1958 by the political leaders of the towns/boroughs at the time summarises the ideals agreed between them. The agreement is based on the wish to foster and develop mutual understanding and respect between the people of the twinned authorities, and to encourage and assist youth and adult organisations, clubs, companies, groups and all persons and organisations to take part in this twinning agreement. The Oath (see below) was signed by the Mayor in each town.

- **To maintain** permanent links between the Councils of our towns;
- **To encourage** in every sphere, interchanges between groups and individuals;
- **To combine** our efforts to bring together our young people and build for them a future free and secure in a lasting atmosphere of peace;
- **To work together** by every means in our power in order to develop to the full the spirit of brotherhood between us.

## 2. Current Organisation of Twinning Links

Current arrangements are that all Civic matters relating to town twinning activity are sent and received through the Mayor's Office. Following this, information is then passed on to the officer responsible for twinning activity to co-ordinate arrangements for official invitations and requests from the twin towns. This responsibility currently rests with the Sport & Leisure service that co-ordinate all twinning activities including organising Mayoral visits.

Links with Mantes-La-Jolie and Schleswig include an annual Mayoral visit that includes up to 6 representatives from each town. The group from Hillingdon usually includes The Mayor and Mayoress plus other Members, an officer and a translator (if required). The responsibility for hosting this rotates annually between the towns.

In addition there is an annual youth event with 8 young people from each twin town visiting one of the towns for a week long programme, usually around a central theme (Sport, Health, Environment, Culture etc.) Additional activities are then organised during the year by any of the towns, usually as a result of the discussion at the annual meeting.

A local voluntary group named Hillingdon Town Twinning Association made up of local residents, groups/clubs and Council Members assisted officers in supporting events connected to Town Twinning. The Mayor of Hillingdon was the organisational president of the association. However, over recent years the level of membership dwindled and the association has ceased to function since 2008.

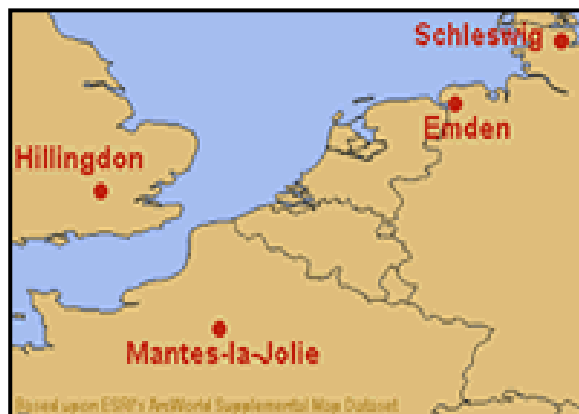
Since the demise of the association, organisation of all activity has been left to the Sport & Leisure team whether or not the event is related to that service.

### 3. About Hillingdon's Twin Towns

Hillingdon has three twin towns: -

Schleswig, Germany and Mantes-La-Jolie, France were originally twinned with Hayes and Harlington (1958) and following the formation of LB Hillingdon it was decided that the links should be retained with the borough as a whole.

Similarly, Emden in Germany was originally twinned with Uxbridge (1961). Again the agreement was extended following the formation of LB Hillingdon.



**About Emden** – The town is located in western Germany, close to the Dutch border and as such has a network of canals, dykes and windmills surrounding the walled city port. Most of the town's historic buildings were destroyed during the war and the town still has a number of above ground concrete WWII shelters. Due to the high water table these could not be built underground. Considered too expensive to demolish, the shelters have now been converted for other uses such as recording studios and youth centres.

2011/12 will mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary but at present no formal arrangements have been made on how to mark this although some informal discussion has taken place with regard to potential links with schools/music and sport events that are already part of the calendar.

**Links with Emden** – These have been quite limited in recent years, however four representatives from Emden visited Hillingdon in 2008 to discuss opportunities for linking our residents and 12 language students from Uxbridge High School are due to visit Emden on a 4 day cultural visit in July. The Mayor travelled to Emden in 2009 and visited a local music festival, regatta and the town museum as well as a tour of a wind turbine plant that is based in town and a major local employer.

**About Mantes** – Mantes is located approximately 40km west of Paris on the River Seine. The history of the town dates back to pre-Norman times and William the Conqueror is reported to have come from this area. The Collegial church Notre Dame in the town was built in 1170 and is a replica of the one found in Paris.

**About Schleswig** - A former Viking settlement, Schleswig is located 30 miles south from the Danish border. The town lies next to the Schlei, a 40 km long inlet of the Baltic. A small English theme garden was planted in Schleswig in 2008 to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our link.

**Links with Mantes-La-Jolie and Schleswig** – These have been more successful with a three-way link between the towns. The host town rotates

each year, taking it in turn to host exchange projects. This includes an annual Mayoral visit and a youth exchange programme. Other events usually around sport, music and work experience requests are also organised with relevant local groups.

The planning conference tends to be organised around a local event and the meeting includes updates from the towns on activity that has happened in the last 12 months. It is usually attended by the visiting Mayor's, other elected members and key officers/officials involved in twinning activities.

#### **4. Summary of Twinning Activity**

Hillingdon has an annual exchange programme with Mantes-La-Jolie and Schleswig with each town taking it in turn to host the exchange visits. The programme includes eight young people (typically aged 15-18yrs) from each town and usually takes place for a week during the summer holidays.

The host town organises a programme for the week that includes team building activities, trips to places of interest, leisure activities and a joint project that the group can work on together. This may be around art, social inclusion of young people, raising awareness of high profile challenges such as the environment, democracy and so on.

A number of different sports clubs and associations have been involved in sport exchanges between the twin towns. In more recent years, these have included a table tennis tournament hosted by the Hillingdon Table Tennis club, a football tournament in Mantes and a Petanque event in Schleswig. A Martial Arts Club in Hayes has a long established association with a club in Emden.

Mantes and Emden in particular are keen to see school links revitalised and Uxbridge High School are the only secondary school to show an interest to date. This has resulted in a recent visit to Emden by a group of year 8 German language students and it is hoped that following this, full links with a school in Emden can be re-established.

A number of primary schools in Hillingdon have expressed an interest in linking with a French school and the Council's advisor for Modern Foreign Languages has organised links with schools in the Yvelines Department where Mantes is located. However, none are actually located in the town of Mantes-La-Jolie.

Hillingdon hosted two work experience placements in 2009 for students from Mantes-La-Jolie and Emden. The students both spent six weeks in local placements to assist them with their studies. A further 1 week placement for two students from Schleswig was organised in 2010.

To recognise the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the twinning arrangement with Schleswig and Mantes-La-Jolie, an event was held in each town. A small English style garden was built in Schleswig based on a design agreed with the Hillingdon

Town Twinning Association that is now permanently maintained by Schleswig Council.

**5. Budget History 2005/6 – 2010/11**

Year	Full Year Budget	Actual Spend	Comments
2005/6	£25,310	£ 5,681	
2006/7	£15,060	£ 7,795	
2007/8	£25,290	£19,122	Higher spend due to hosting year with Mantes and & Schleswig
2008/9	£15,580	£15,284	Higher spend due to 50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary events with Mantes & Schleswig
2009/10	£15,620	£10,690	
2010/11	£ 8,620*	£8,500 (est)	* Plus €9,666 European Commission grant.