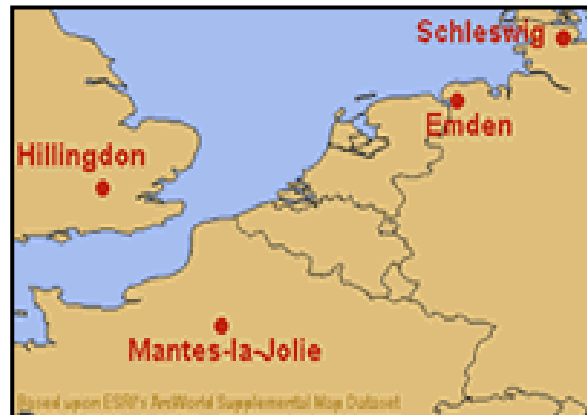




# HILLINGDON

LONDON

## RESIDENTS' AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE 2010/2011



### *A REVIEW OF HILLINGDON'S TOWN TWINNING RELATIONSHIPS*

#### Members of the Committee:

**Cllr Michael Markham (Chairman)**  
**Cllr Shirley Harper-O'Neil (Vice-Chairman)**  
**Cllr Janet Duncan (Labour Lead)**  
**Cllr Judy Kelly**  
**Cllr June Nelson**  
**Cllr Susan O'Brien**



## **CONTENTS**

<b><i>Chairman's Foreword</i></b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b><i>i. Background, Terms of Reference and Methodology</i></b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b><i>ii. Summary of Findings</i></b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b><i>iii. Conclusions and Recommendations</i></b> .....	<b>14</b>

## Chairman's Foreword

The principle behind town twinning is very admirable – by encouraging people from differing countries to meet together and to share each others culture and history, an environment is created within which conflict is less likely to break out.

This was certainly the thinking after the Second World War when twinning was established in 1958 between Schleswig in Germany and Mantes-La-Jolie in France with Hayes and Harlington and in 1961 between Emden in Germany and Uxbridge. Both arrangements being extended following the formation of the London Borough of Hillingdon.

However, the world has changed dramatically over the past fifty years. Greater mobility of people and developments in technology now enable all of us to travel and to learn about other cultures around the world.

We were asked two questions: are there any benefits to Hillingdon residents in continuing with the current town twinning relationships and would there be any benefits to residents in twinning with a similar size authority or authorities overseas?

As can be seen from this report, the answer to the first question is 'no' and to the second, 'yes'.

The committee is firmly of the view that there are benefits in maintaining relationships with our colleagues in the departments in which Mantes-La-Jolie and Emden are based and we put forward a number of recommendations that will develop such twinning in the light of today's economic and cultural environment.

Finally, I would like to thank all external witnesses and officers whose hard work has made this review possible.



Councillor Michael Markham

## **i. Background, Importance and Methodology**

### **Background to the review**

This review is one of two chosen in June 2010 by the Residents' and Environmental Services Policy Overview Committee for 2010/11.

The choice was made according to set criteria aimed at ensuring Policy Overview reviews focus on matters that are important locally and that cover topics that the Committee can add value to and make an impact on.

### **Aim of the review**

A review into the current arrangements Hillingdon has in place with Schleswig and Emden in Germany and Mantes-La-Jolie in France, 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 examine current use of resources and costs associated with town twinning activities to determine value for money.
4. To investigate potential benefits that could be gained by linking Hillingdon with a similar size borough overseas.
5. To report to Cabinet recommendations based upon outcomes of the review.

### **Reasons for the review**

The review provided 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 were in establishing

an alternative arrangement with a similar sized authority or, indeed, authorities, overseas

The review included the current co-ordination of the programme, the 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 examined the scope of current twinning activities and any benefits to Hillingdon residents there were 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 were 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.

## **Methodology**

### **1. Witnesses**

The following people assisted the Residents' and Environmental Services Policy Overview Committee in its deliberations

- **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.

## **ii. Summary of Findings**

This chapter explains the rationale behind the Committee's recommendations. It draws on the evidence presented to the review, which can be found in appendices:

### **Background**

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 summarising 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.

However, it is important to note that the Mayors of Mantes-La-Jolie, Schleswig and Emden are elected executive posts, whereas the Hillingdon Mayoral responsibilities are purely ceremonial and thus the Hillingdon Mayor has no decision –making or budget allocation powers.

Links with Mantes-La-Jolie and Schleswig include an annual Mayoral visit that includes up to six 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

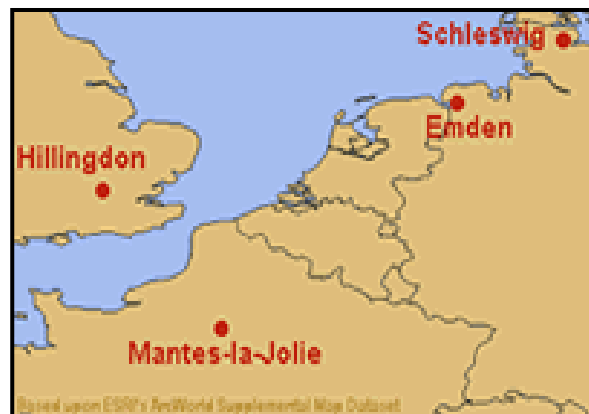
Hillingdon has three twin towns: -

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 is a major local employer.

**About Mantes-La-Jolie** – Mantes-La-Jolie 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 in Germany. 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 but Uxbridge High School is 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**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Full Year Budget</b>	<b>Actual Spend</b>	<b>Comments</b>
2005/6	£25,310	£ 5,681	N/A
2006/7	£15,060	£ 7,795	N/A
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.

### **iii. Conclusions and Recommendations**

**The following are proposed as conclusions and recommendations to go into the Committee's final report.**

**The Committee concludes:**

Undoubtedly there are few benefits to local residents in the current twinning relationship. It is clear that the cost of running the current activities, particularly the exchanges, is high and the reach is low – in 2010 just eight young people from Hillingdon participated.

There are external funds available for overseas cultural exchanges, primarily via the EU, which could replace or supplement any council investment used to subsidise international trips to the twinned towns – through this route encouraging local community groups (Sports Clubs, Scout Groups, Schools etc) to take advantage of the relationships with the twin towns for e.g. language exchange visits, international camps or European 'tours'.

The purpose of the current twin-town arrangement is to promote the joint interests of similarly sized local authorities in Europe, however the reality of the impact of three relatively modest local authorities is likely to be able to make and the value for money of this, is low.

The purpose of twinning is to develop civic 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.

Twinning activity must demonstrate a clear public benefit; facilitate learning and understanding and use public money accountably.

The key to the success of twinning arrangements is involvement by local residents in each of the twinned authorities and before committing use of Council resources; expenditure must be in furtherance of this purpose.

#### Opportunities within the existing relationships

Representatives from Hillingdon, Mantes-La-Jolie and Schleswig – which are twinned with each other, as well as with Hillingdon - meet on an annual basis to discuss activities and future programmes. Links with Emden, which is a separate twinning arrangement, is somewhat less formal although contact is maintained on a mostly ad-hoc basis. We note that Cllrs George and Judith Cooper have been regularly attending these meetings at their own expense.

There is undoubtedly an opportunity to look at expanding the current range of exchanges, using opportunities highlighted during visits to and around the area in which the towns are situated.

This includes: -

#### Arts and culture

- An annual jazz festival takes place in and around Mantes annually providing an opportunity for local music groups to take part
- The regional music school is based in Mantes (although it also serves the wider Yvelines département)
- A wide range of exhibition space exists to share and display artistic talent
- A number of museums are located in the various towns
- There is also the opportunity to involve groups and performers at Hillingdon events such as Big Fest, Hayes Carnival, Med Fest etc.

## Education

- Opportunity to build on the current number of school links that benefit from the additional support of being in the twin town – as per the Uxbridge High School
- Secondary schools in Emden and Mantes have expressed an interest in finding partner schools in Hillingdon.
- Work experience opportunities.

## Sport

- All of the twinned authorities have expressed an interest in continuing to use sport as a way to link people with a common interest

Other possibilities that could provide education links/visits for specialist subjects in schools or Brunel.

- European Space Agency Ariane Rocket Plant in Mantes-La-Jolie
- Wind Turbine Plant in Emden
- VW car plant in Emden

There may also be an opportunity to share good practice around common themes that affect local government such as economic development, town centre management, youth policy and neighbourhood policing. This would bring in other statutory services and potentially the business sector. However, as yet this has not been explored fully.

## Funding and Resources

Typically the host borough co-ordinates and pays for hospitality (including main meals and accommodation) and activities during events. Visiting boroughs pay for their own transportation (usually air fare / Eurostar) to and from the host venue. This makes hosting events such as the youth exchange quite expensive. However, the ability to identify and bid for European funding still exists for certain projects and a planned approach to

rotating the responsibility for activities has enabled the costs to be kept within the current annual budget (approx £8,500 pa)

The exception is around work experience placements where the visiting student needs to pay the costs for their own stay with only a small contribution from the host such as a central contact that co-ordinated the placement and some help with travel arrangements and advice for getting around.

With the current level of resources available (annual budget of £8,500pa + officer time) it is possible to sustain the existing arrangements with scope to increase activity as indicated without additional budget.

Better value could also be achieved through maximising opportunities available through European funding (although not all events will be covered by this), seeking a greater contribution to costs by the people participating and reviewing (in partnership with the twin towns) the amount of resources used for official visits. This could be by reducing the number of direct people representing the Council on trips and the number of days from 4 to 3.

Future use of resources and agreed scope for developing partnerships could be included in a new set of protocols to ensure that resources are used effectively and appropriately in future.

**Are there any benefits to residents in Hillingdon being twinned to a similar sized local authority overseas?**

Whilst some may argue that there may be greater advantage in seeking new twinning relationships with more culturally diverse countries and those within growing economies- for instance, twinning with a similarly sized local authority in China or Africa, seeking out twinning opportunities with cultures more dramatically different than the current twin towns would perhaps provide a more dramatic learning experience for all involved.



The view is that it would be best to build upon the current relationships but to extend the twinning with the departments within which the three towns are based, rather than with the local town 'boroughs'.

Extending the twinning arrangements to include a larger authority outside of the three European areas with whom we currently have links, would need to be at the expense of the current relationships, as the funding and officer time would be substantially greater to facilitate any new link adequately.

**The Committee therefore recommends:**

**Recommendation 1: A Member and Officer Working Group should be established to explore the benefits, developments and arrangements of twinning with the departments in which Mantes-La-Jolie and Emden are situated.** This Group will nurture twinning opportunities and raise awareness of activities taking place in Hillingdon's twinned towns. The Group should comprise Elected Members, an Officer from Education and Children's Services, a Youth Service Representative, Art & Culture officer, and a representative from Sport and Leisure.

**Recommendation 1 a: That the Working Party establishes set guidelines that Budget spending should be adhered to.** Spending of resources should be monitored to ensure the resources are spent appropriately.

**Recommendation 1 b: That the Working Party investigate the length of exchange visits and the number of representatives.** The Committee believe that the length of visit has the capacity to be cut down to 3 days instead of 4, with the number of representatives decreasing to 3 from 6; thereby reducing costs.

**Recommendation 2: That, subject to the working group's findings, the town twinning relationship with Schleswig be ended.** There are few benefits in maintaining relationships with this town as it does not reflect

Hillingdon in terms of size and it has its own arrangements with Mantes-La-Jolie.

**Recommendation 3: Continue with attendance at the annual conference by Hillingdon Council Cabinet member/s, Chairman of the Twinning Working Party and relevant officer to maintain relationships and to agree on-going contact strategy/updating of links.** This will help identify opportunities for joint activities and assist in developing contacts with locally based elected representatives and officials.

**Recommendation 4: Update the contact directory of businesses / community / music / sports groups etc in the two departments for use by those Hillingdon groups looking to make links in these two areas - not just the towns - and publicise these contact via the Hillingdon web site.** This will enable organisations to identify and make contact with relevant groups in these two areas as and when they wish.

**Recommendation 5: Better use the Council's directory to pinpoint UK and EU funds available for such trips, including how to apply guides and to publicise this information via the Council's website.** This will eliminate direct expenditure by Hillingdon.

**Recommendation 6: The current officer arrangement be revised to ensure a cross directorate approach is taken in place when advising and organising twinning arrangements.** This will reduce officer time, although he/she should be available to give personal guidance to Groups and individuals seeking to visit the two areas as and when required.

**Recommendation 7: That a budget of circa £8,000.00 only be allocated for town twinning over in the years Hillingdon are hosting the annual conference or organising youth exchanges. The budget of circa £4,000.00 only should be granted in the year Hillingdon are not hosting the annual conference or the youth exchange.** This would be used to

cover existing visit plans. However, this should be reviewed at the end of 2011 in the light of progress in implementing the above recommendations thereby reducing costs.