

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DECISION

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: 14 SEPTEMBER 2010
title: SCOPING DOCUMENT REVIEW ON THE BENEFITS AND POSSIBLE
IMPLICATIONS OF TOWN TWINNING
submitted by: COUNCILLOR J HILL
principal author: COUNCILLOR J HILL

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The earliest form of town twinning in Europe is thought to have been between the German City of Paderborn and the French City of Le Mans in 1836. Keighley in West Yorkshire, had a sister city arrangement with Guresnes and Puteaux, France, starting in 1905. The first modern town twinning agreement is thought to have been between Keighley and Poix-du-Nord, France in 1925. Historians tend to agree that town twinning was invented in the form we recognize today, immediately following the end of the Second World War. Initially it was used in an attempt to construct European citizenship, not least by the Council of European Municipalities founded in 1951.
- 1.2 There are many forms of town twinning relationships. Not only can traditional links be of relative permanence but can be formed to establish formal agreements between localities or simply friendship agreements, sister city agreements or a memorandum of understanding but often these different forms of relationships are indistinguishable from that of formal town twinning agreements.
- 1.3 Town twinning has been said to involve relatively formal relationships that are relatively long term, open, inclusive and equal in character and can be composed of the following forms:-
1. Traditional town twinning – associated with town twinning associations and/or municipal authorities in Western Europe and cultural and/or civic exchange.
 2. Sister city relationships – associated with towns and cities primarily in the USA and/or local economic development strategies.
 3. North-South Links – associated with localities in the so-called Global North and South with concerns for intellectual development.
 4. Interurban technical assistance projects – associated with programmes to influence transition in post-socialist Europe and Asia.
 5. Intellectual partnerships - associated with local governments and their multiple relationships with other forms of government.
- 1.4 Twinning links and international partnerships have expanded to every continent with large numbers of twinned towns being set up in India and China to help jobs and stimulate economic growth, investment and prosperity. Indeed a survey conducted by the Local Government Association in 2007 revealed that about 1400 British communities had over 2500 twinning links with overseas associations in 100 countries across much of the world.
- 1.5 The changing face of Britain and the global economy means that more than ever the development of economic and cultural ties is becoming increasingly important to the preservation of the wellbeing and welfare of communities. Town twinning links is

therefore something that can generate all sorts of relationships, not only to boost cultural understanding, but also to help generate jobs and investment.

2. RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

- 2.1 Based on the following scoping exercise, a Working Group be established to explore the most suitable form of town twinning that could have social, cultural and economic benefits for the Ribble Valley, with a view to a report being presented to a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

COUNCILLOR JOHN HILL

Objectives and Purpose of the Review:

To make such enquiries as may be considered necessary in order to produce a report that evaluates the potential benefits and implications of the Council being twinned with another local authority, city, town or hamlet, either within the United Kingdom or abroad with a view to establishing relations with people who live and work in similar conditions and have the same aspirations as residents of the Ribble Valley Borough, including whether and to what extent should the Overview and Scrutiny Committee appoint a body to undertake this piece of work to ensure there is a consistency of approach and that the aims and objectives promote and develop the social and economic wellbeing of the Borough.

Desired Outcomes of the review:

To establish the feasibility of the Council being twinned with an area of similar characteristics and the need for a working group to be set up to investigate the benefits of forming town twinning links.

Information Required:

Additional Information will be required from Officers at Ribble Valley Borough Council and from local authorities who already have town twinning links.

Methods to be Employed:

It is anticipated that a working group will start by examining various forms of town twinning, establishing whether such links are feasible in the context of the nature and characteristics of the Ribble Valley, the financial implications and the benefits to be derived from the study, in order to gain a full understanding of the implications.

Reference should also be made to the UK Town Twinning Website Portal for additional information.

Witnesses and Consultees:

C Winterbottom RVBC (Leisure and Sports)
T Bamber RVBC (Sports Development)
D Ingham RVBC (Partnership Officer)
A Harrison RVBC (Activity Co-ordinator)
IT Dept RVBC (Website)
Rebecca Kay RVBC (Tourism and Arts)
Melissa Watts RVBC (Regeneration Projects)
Chris Shuttleworth RVBC (Emergency Planning)
Clitheroe Town Council
Longridge Town council
Parish Councils in the Ribble Valley

Timescales:

A working group would probably need from say October 2010 until April 2011 to complete its investigations. A final report would be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for further consideration.

Resources and Budgets:

It is unlikely that additional funding would be required from RVBC resources. Much of the work will be in the form of research and interviews of the officers listed.