

TOWN TWINNING

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council policy on town twinning was last reviewed in 2008, at which time it was resolved that the policy in relation to formal links remain unaltered. Following a recent request from Gorey to “rejuvenate” the existing link with Oban members asked that an informal discussion be held to explore the possible economic, social and cultural themes of benefit to both areas. This discussion has now taken place and details of such anticipated benefits are included in this report.

Members are asked to note the submitted information and consider whether the Area Committee should rejuvenate the existing twinning link with Gorey by developing economic, social and cultural themes of benefit to both areas.

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2.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the information provided as a result of an informal discussion with Gorey with regard to town twinning and consider whether the Area Committee should agree to rejuvenate the existing twinning links by developing economic, social and cultural themes of benefit to both areas.

3.0 DETAIL

- 3.1 The Council policy on town twinning was last reviewed by the Economy Policy and Performance Group, at the request of the Executive, in March 2008. At that time the PPG resolved that the policy in relation to formal links remain unaltered. They also resolved that if an Area Committee wished to establish any additional informal twinning link, they should do so without any staff or financial resource from the Council. Oban, Lorn and the Isles Area Committee noted this recommendation in April 2008.
- 3.2 The formal links which are in place for Oban Lorn and the Isles are with Gorey, and also with Laurinburg in the United States, though the Laurinburg link is principally between Oban High School and the education authority in America.
- 3.3 The Council currently has a small revenue account for twinning activities which consists of approximately £5000. The agreed practice has been that £2500 is retained centrally and accessed to support the most active twinning link between Mid Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands Area Committee and Amberg Sulzbach and that the remaining £2500 be divided equally between the other 3 Area Committees.
- 3.4 Members will recall that in 2014 a request was made for a potential twinning visit to be made to Oban by Gorey Town Council in May as there were imminent changes about to take place in local government in Ireland, and the Gorey Town Council would cease to exist with effect 2nd

June 2014. Although the members of the Oban Lorn and the Isles Area Committee agreed to such a visit other pressures meant that it did not in fact go ahead. At the June 2015 Area Committee members considered a request from Gorey requesting that dialogue be undertaken with a view to rejuvenating the existing twinning link between the two areas and placing the arrangements on a sound basis for the future. The Area Committee agreed that informal dialogue should take place by a video conference link to explore this possibility.

3.5 The suggested VC meeting took place on Tuesday 15th September, and was attended by Cllrs Robertson and MacLean. The technology supporting the meeting generally worked quite well, though there were instances of loss of audio connection at times. A significant number of Gorey councillors attended the meeting, and all displayed a significant level of enthusiasm for continuing with the existing twinning link with Oban, Lorn and the Isles.

3.6 Particular opportunities which were raised included:

i) Potential benefits for Gorey- the opportunity to learn from OLI's tourism best practise and focus, and keen to link into/develop shellfish industry, significant learning opportunities from links with SAMS

ii) Potential benefits for OLI- lessons in regards to Gorey's significant population growth and from their focus on inward investment by new technology industries. The timing for this could be very positive given infrastructure improvement in the OLI area and considering how OLI attracts high tech industries to take up the opportunities provided by TIF.

iii) Commonality/joint project- business development and regeneration, can a project be put together which gives opportunity for the infrastructure investment that OLI is making through CHORD/TIF to be linked/enhanced by Gorey's success in attracting inward investment from high tech industries, and for Gorey, how do they develop their infrastructure as successfully as OLI is doing to enhance the offer made to the high tech industries locating there? There could be a possibility of a joint project being developed, building on both sets of experiences/challenges being able to be worked up and potentially funded. The work and practises of the Gorey Chamber of Commerce and BID4OBAN could be built into this to enhance the partnership basis of taking this forward.

iv) Underpinning this would be the background of Culture/Heritage/education links, some of which are already in place but in need of rejuvenation.

v) This work could be progressed on the basis potentially of setting up E bulletins/blogs/shared websites, and maybe generic email addresses for specific projects but also more generic links between the communities, and possibly an information sharing hub. Regularity of discussions by Video Conference could be put in place and the possibility of perhaps bi annual visits between the 2 communities could be explored.

3.7 Members are reminded of the budget position in regards to sustaining

existing twinning links (currently £833 per annum) in considering the possibility of further developing the existing twinning link with Gorey.

4.0 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 Following informal dialogue held with Gorey a number of potential economic, social and cultural projects which could be of benefit to both communities have been identified. Members are invited to note this information and to consider whether the Area Committee should agree to rejuvenate the existing twinning links with Gorey in light of this detail.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

Policy:	Consistent with the Council's policy on twinning
Financial:	Links with Gorey can be provided within available budget , there is no budget provision for new links
Legal:	None
HR:	None
Equalities:	None
Risk:	None
Customer Service:	None

Executive Director of Customer Services

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