

**TOWN TWINNING**

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**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. Recently there has been a request from Gorey to “rejuvenate” the existing link with Oban, and there have been two informal approaches made about potential new twinning links between Oban and communities in France.

Members are asked to note the current position with regard to town twinning and consider whether the Area Committee should undertake dialogue with Gorey with a view to rejuvenating the existing twinning links by developing economic, social and cultural themes of benefit to both areas 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 current position with regard to town twinning and consider whether the Area Committee should undertake dialogue with Gorey with a view to rejuvenating 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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. There have been recent communications from Gorey requesting that dialogue be undertaken with a view to rejuvenating the existing twinning link between the 2 towns and placing the arrangements on a sound basis for the future.

- 3.5 There have also recently been 2 approaches made to the Council about potential new twinning links with Oban. A couple left their email details at the service point in Oban and asked that contact be made with them to explore the possibility of a twinning link with their home town in France. No further details are available at this time, but contact has been made requesting that information on the type of locality and reasons for twinning with Oban be forwarded. Additionally, an approach has been made by a Mr Christian Godart requesting that Oban consider twinning with his home town of Portiragnes in the Herault department in the South Of France. Mr Godart notes in his communication that Portiragnes is a town with 3,200 inhabitants where the main economic activity has traditionally be winegrowing, but over the past 20 years a beach resort has been developed which brings a strong tourist trade to the area, with the population growing to 32,000 in the summer months. Mr Godart feels that a twinning link with Oban would promote both areas as tourist destinations and allow cultural and historical links to be developed.
- 3.6 Members were made aware of both of these approaches at the January 2015 Business meeting, at which time it was agreed that the Gorey matter should be discussed, and that in regards the potential for links to new communities to be made, BID4OBAN should be approached and invited to discuss with Cllrs Robertson and Maclean a possible way of taking this forward in partnership. BID4OBAN staff have been approached in this regard, but due to pressing matters at their most recent Board meeting this item was not discussed, and a response to the suggestion of working in partnership with the Council is still awaited.
- 3.7 Wexford County Council have now written formally to the Council indicating their unanimous agreement at a recent meeting to seek opportunities to build on the long standing twinning arrangement which exists between Oban and Gorey, in particular by developing a platform for information exchange across economic, social and cultural themes to benefit both areas.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

- 4.1 Oban has an existing twinning link with Gorey, though there have not been active visits for some time. The Council is now in receipt of a formal letter seeking agreement to build on that long standing arrangement by developing economic, social and cultural themes of benefit to both areas. Members are asked to consider this formal request. Members are further asked to note that a response from BID4OBAN is awaited in regards the possibility of progressing links with new communities in partnership with that group.

#### **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**  
**20<sup>th</sup> May 2015**

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