

Brecknockshire Committee - Twinning Sub-group meeting

20th December 2017

Present : Cllr Matthew Dorrance, Cllr James Evans, Julie Lewis (PCC Tourism Officer)

Apologies : Cllr Rosemarie Harris, Jenni Thomas (PCC Regeneration Manager)

The meeting was called to review the long standing twinning relationship between Powys County Council (Brecknockshire) and Blaubeuren (Baden-Wurttemberg, Germany.) The note of the last shire meeting was read, and the sub-group meeting was called to evaluate the current arrangements and propose a series of options to be considered at the next shire committee to be held on 24th January 2018.

A letter had been received by the Shire from the Burgermeister in Blaubeuren offering to assist with the cost of maintaining the twinning links.

Background

Julie Lewis gave some background to the twinning relationship and confirmed that the twinning partnership agreement was re-signed in 1999, after Powys CC became a unitary authority. In the early years of the partnership, regular exchanges between the two areas schools was an important part of the relationship, and official delegations visited on a regular basis. However in more recent years the school exchanges have become more challenging because of the small numbers of student learning German as a foreign language in Powys' schools.

A group external to Powys CC was set up in 2005/6 called Friends of Blaubeuren, and a bank account was opened, into which funds were transferred to support twinning activities (from fund raising, from Powys CC tourism service budgets and donations from some of the previous Brecknockshire Chairman's allowances.)

The usual arrangement had been for a delegation from Brecknockshire to be invited to attend the Blaubeuren Kinderfest (held in July every 2 years) and every other year a delegation from Blaubeuren would visit, however, it became more difficult to host a delegation from Blaubeuren as there is no allocated budget to support the exchange visits.

Previous hosting's had depending largely on the good will of Brecknockshire Councillors, Friends of Blaubeuren members (of which there are about 6 excluding Council members/former members and employees) and the Council's tourism officer who helped organise the visits.

The last visit hosted by Brecknockshire was in 2014. A visit was being planned for summer 2016, but as the Tourism Officer was away on maternity leave, there was no-one else able to assist in planning the visit in her absence and the visit didn't take place.

The most recent Kinderfest was in 2017 and no-one from Brecknockshire attended for the first time since 2005. In 2015, the Shire-chair (Cllr Huw Williams) and Vice-chair (Cllr Gareth Ratcliff) attended.

Future Options

- Option 1** **Ask Brecknockshire to allocate a budget specifically for the Twinning Partnership. Cllrs' in attendance referred to funds in existence that could be reallocated if the Shire members were in agreement.**

- Option 2** **Change the emphasis of the partnership from the Council to the community, look to set up a community committee who would fund raise and work voluntarily to preserve the partnership. For example the Brecon – Gousenou twinning partnership.**

- Option 3** **Seek to formally dissolve the partnership (legal and practical considerations would need investigating).**

- Option 4** **Continue as the partnership currently runs, and write to the Burgemeister in Blaubeuren to explain the situation and why regular visits (both visiting and hosting) are difficult to sustain.**