

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

28 SEPTEMBER 2011

UPDATE ON INITIATIVES WITH TWIN / SISTER CITIES

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Summary

This report is to update the committee on the international relations initiatives that have taken place so far in 2011, overseen by each of the three international relations sub groups

1. Budget and Policy Framework

1.1 This is a matter for the International Relations Committee.

2. Members Update Report

Medway's Japanese Twin Cities – Ito / Yokosuka

2.1 **The Annual U.K. Japan Local Government Conference** took place at the Rochester Corn Exchange on 4 March and attracted delegates from towns and cities across England that have sister cities in Japan. Former Councillor Susan Haydock delivered a welcome speech to the delegates and also welcomed representatives from the Japanese Embassy and the Japan Local Government Office, which is based in London.

2.2 There were 50 delegates at the conference and presentations were given by the Japanese Embassy. Key note speakers included: Professor Marie Conte – Helm, Director of The Daiwa Anglo – Japanese Foundation (Supports

educational and cultural events) Kenji Ikeda, Secretary General of The Council of Local Authorities for International Relations.¹

- 2.3 This conference was held at no cost to Medway Council.
- 2.4 **Visit of the Ito International Relations Association** - Five Members of The Ito International Relations Association attended The William Adams Festival on 10 September and stayed in Medway at their own expense. They were hosted for meals and transport by members of the Medway Japan Group. At the festival they told tales of William Adams' life in Japan. They also helped to raise awareness of the Japan / Medway student exchange programme and the benefits gained by the four students that take part from each City every year. This creates the opportunity for the students to use their language skills, gaining understanding at a practical level of the differences in cultural values and day-to-day life in each other's country. Further information from this visit is set out in Annex I to the report.
- 2.5 **Delegation Visit from the Japan Local Government Centre** - A delegation from the Japan Local Government Centre, based in London visited Medway on 1 September. This was led by Mr Yutaka Tanaka the Director. They held discussions with Cllr. Chitty, Clem Smith and Wayne Saunders from the Council's economic development team at the Medway Innovation Centre.
- 2.6 The delegation were very interested in our economic development programme and the potential of the Innovation Centre as a great opportunity for start-up business and attracting high value new businesses to Medway. They were particularly impressed that the Innovation Centre is already almost full, accommodating over 50 local companies. They were equally impressed by the support that Medway Council gives to the Medway Business community and the continued support to the student exchange scheme. They expressed a keen desire to keep in touch and link up with Medway on potential future Japanese inward investment opportunities and also to co-operate on assisting Medway businesses who wish to develop Japanese markets.
- 2.7 **2012 – 30th Anniversary of Sister City Status with Yokosuka** - The Japan Group would like to make the committee aware that 2012 will mark the 30th Anniversary of the formal signing of Sister City Status between Gillingham and Yokosuka. Members of the group have suggested that it may be possible to include this element in the 2012 Will Adams Festival. As the Mayor of Yokosuka was not able to come here in 2011 due to the problems in Japan it

¹ Other speakers included Ashley Davis – International Student Exchange, Dr, Peter Smart, Senior Lecturer at Aberdeen Business School, Stephanie Walsh, International and Tourism Officer at Derbyshire County Council, Joanna Lavan Manager of International Trade and Relations and Creative Industries,, Sheffield

may be possible to invite him here in 2012 to attend the event and to meet with the Mayor of Medway.

- 2.8 **The Medway / Ito / Yokosuka student exchange** took place in August and proved to be very successful. Four students were selected by interview - two visited Yokosuka and two visited Ito. The two students chosen to visit Yokosuka were able to take part in the Yokosuka International Youth Conference. This gave them opportunities to meet with students from five other countries and share and exchange ideas. This also gave the opportunity for them to stay in Japan for four weeks. All of our four Medway students were congratulated on their knowledge and use of the Japanese language as they had to make speeches in Japanese at several events.
- 2.9 This proved to be an invaluable opportunity for the Medway students to hone and enhance their confidence in spoken Japanese. On their return they brought back four students from Japan – two from each city and they spent two weeks in Medway and visited London, Canterbury, Broadstairs as well as Rochester. They also visited the Historic Dockyard, Gillingham and the sites linked to Will Adams.
- 2.10 This annual exchange of students from Medway and Japan gives four students from each country the opportunity to build their self-confidence. It is an excellent opportunity for them to build life and decision-making skills, which they will need when entering the world of business and University and in the longer term seeking employment.

France - Valenciennes

- 2.11 **55th Anniversary Twinning Preparation Visit** – In March a visit was made to Valenciennes to discuss the celebration of the 55th Anniversary of the original twinning between Chatham and Valenciennes.
- 2.12 Meetings were held with Madam Adam the deputy Mayor with responsibilities for International Relations and Economic Development. These meetings were attended by the then lead Council officer on international relations Ashley Davis. He held discussions with the following persons from Valenciennes: the leader of the Chamber of Commerce; the owners of the new shopping centre; members from the Home & Gastronomy Association and a school who were preparing a play based on a Tale of Two Cities. Also present were senior officers from the tourism department who are interested in working on and sharing best practice ideals with Medway.
- 2.13 Several ideas were discussed on how to mark the 55th anniversary of the twinning link and proposals were made to arrange a French weekend in Chatham and an English Week in Valenciennes. The Valenciennes

representatives also proposed inviting the Mayor of Medway to attend along with several guests wearing Dickens Festival Costumes.

- 2.14 ** This visit was organised at no cost to Medway Council.
- 2.15 **55th Anniversary Celebration – Valenciennes** - The Mayor of Medway attended the Valenciennes event on the weekend of 7/ 8 May with six local representatives who were invited to attend and to wear Dickens Costumes. Also in attendance was a local Medway artist who had earlier in the year led the production of a film made by students from Hundred of Hoo School. This film was presented to Valenciennes representatives. Also in attendance were with two students from Mid Kent College who had assisted with the editing and production of the film.
- 2.16 *** Hosting and Accommodation was at no cost to Medway Council.
- 2.17 **55th Anniversary Celebration – Medway** The 55th Anniversary was also celebrated in Medway with an events programme held in Chatham on 19 / 21 May. The programme included a three day French Market and a 1950s inspired fashion show in the Pentagon in Chatham. This programme was organised by the Medway Town Centre Management Team with the support and assistance of Mid Kent College / The University of Creative Art /The Dance Alley Dance Team / New Look Fashions / Boots Chemist and other businesses in the Pentagon / Pentagon Staff and Norfolk Line – Dover.
- 2.18 This celebration of the 55th Anniversary programme in Chatham brought many additional footfall into Chatham due to the three day French Market and the 50s Fashion Show which also filled the Valenciennes Square in the Pentagon with potential customers for the three presentations and brought additional footfall to the centre. This is an event that has future potential to support summer retail promotional programmes for Chatham Town Centre.
- 2.19 As well as being a very successful and well organised programme of activities, this also enabled discussions between Mid Kent College, the University of Creative Arts and the University of Valenciennes as well as the Home and Gastronomy Society from Valenciennes. They discussed ideas for new joint projects and potential student exchange which need to be followed through by either a visit to Valenciennes by staff from the College and the University or to invite Madam Adam and her colleagues to come to Medway for discussions in Medway. The visit to Medway would offer the opportunity to raise awareness of our Universities in Northern France and the development of the new site of Mid Kent College and the quality of the facilities available.
- 2.20 Madam Adam brought a party of 52 visitors from Valenciennes to attend the Summer Dickens Festival as part of the 55th Anniversary Celebrations of the twinning link. Two members of the Medway French Group visited the Annual

August “Bin Bin” Festival, at which marching bands parade through the streets of Valenciennes led by their Flemish giant and mascot of Valenciennes “Bin Bin” and her bambinos.

- 2.21 The trip was organised at the members’ own expense.
- 2.22 There is a proposal that a coach trip is organised to visit the Valenciennes Christmas Market in December. This will be open to the public and promoted in the Medway Newspapers.

Foshan – China

- 2.23 **Visit of Bradfield School to Foshan** - Bradfield School in Chatham had a highly successful visit to Foshan, taking eight of their pupils and four of their teaching staff to visit a school there. This trip was the first time many of the students had flown long distance and some had never flown before.
- 2.24 Following the visit, the head teacher held an evening at his school for the students to present a film of their visit and to speak to parents and guests of their experiences in China. Parents, teachers and visitors felt that this had been a most worthwhile trip and a great opportunity to see how China works with and supports their students. They also wish to thank the Council’s International relations committee for their financial assistance and support with their trip.
- 2.25 **4 Foshan Teachers have completed Placements in Medway** - Four teachers from Foshan have been working in Medway schools on placements over the past school year. They have had great success with the after school Mandarin language Clubs that they have organised. These have been popular with the pupils and have helped to raise awareness of language skills and Chinese culture. These placements were organised with the assistance of the British Council.
- 2.26 **Visit to Medway of a Delegation from Foshan** - A delegation from Foshan visited Medway in June, led by Mr Liang the Deputy Chief Executive of the Chancheng District and Mr Xie Deputy Director of the Chancheng Foreign Affairs Department. They attended the Dickens Festival and the Dickens Festival Ball. During this visit they also visited some of the Medway tourist attractions as well as regeneration sites. They held meetings with Cllr Chitty and Stephen Gaimster to discuss potential opportunities for future project co-operation. Whilst at Gun Wharf the delegation visited the Mayor of Medway.
- 2.27 **The Visit of Two Foshan Schools to Medway** - Two schools from Foshan visited their link schools in Medway. The Rong Shan School took part in the Chatham Grammar School for Boys International Day – (this also included a school visit from Ito in Japan). Rochester Maths School also had a visit from

their link school Foshan called Number 3 High School. The students shared a great day out in Rochester.

- 2.28 This visit from Foshan by fifty students and eight teachers, including the head teacher of the number 3 high school, has helped to strengthen the programme of educational projects between Medway and Foshan as well as with Ito and Yokosuka in Japan.

3. Financial and legal implications

- 3.1 A net total of £6,189 was spent from the International Relations Committee budget on initiatives in 2010-11. The headline expenditures were:
- £4,033 of transport costs, mainly for the student exchange to Japan, off set by £2,000 in private contributions. The net cost was £2,033.
 - £2,000 in grants for school exchanges with Foshan and Valenciennes by Bradfield School and Hundred of Hoo School respectively.
 - £2,008 on hosting delegation visits from Foshan, China and Valenciennes and attending Valenciennes event.
 - £148 on subsistence and parking fees.
- 3.2 The Japanese Local Government Conference at Rochester Corn Exchange, the preparation visit to Valenciennes for the 55th Anniversary activities and the hosting and accommodation costs for the Mayor's visit to Valenciennes all took place at no cost to Medway Council.
- 3.3 Under the Local Government Act 2000, the Council has the power to promote or improve the economic or social well being in its area.
- 3.4 This power may be exercised for the benefit of some or all of the Council's entire area as well as for residents in the area. The well-being powers permit expenditure to be incurred outside Medway's area, provided there is a demonstrable social, economic or environmental benefit for Medway.
- 3.5 The Council's authority includes the power to incur expenditure, give financial assistance and enter into agreements with any person, in determining whether or how to exercise this power, the Council must have regard to its strategy for promoting the well-being of its area.
- 3.6 Section 176 of the Local Government Act 1972 permits the Council to defray the costs of members who make official and courtesy visits outside the United Kingdom on behalf of Medway. The section also permits the Council to defray the expenses incurred in the reception and entertainment by way of official courtesy of distinguished persons or representatives of local government and public.

4. Risk management implications

- 4.1 A system is in place whereby visits abroad involving Council representatives are risk assessed in advance in accordance with standard procedures.

5. Recommendations

5.1 Members are asked to:

- i) Note the programme of activities undertaken as part of Medway's international relations links;
- ii) Note the number of events and activities that were undertaken without any cost to Medway Council – as set out in section 3 – financial implications.
- iii) Endorse proposals to welcome the Mayor of Yokosuka, Japan in 2012 for an official visit to Medway as part of the 30th anniversary celebrations of the Sister City status with Yokosuka.
- iv) Endorse proposals for a coach trip to the Valenciennes Christmas market to be organised as part of the 55th anniversary celebrations of the twinning link, to reciprocate the visit of the Valenciennes delegation to the Dickens summer festival.

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Background papers

None

See Annex I – Report produced by Sue Haydock on visit from Ito Japanese delegation.

**ANNEX I - REPORT ON VISIT OF FIVE MEMBERS OF THE ITO ASSOCIATION FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
FRIDAY 9TH SEPTEMBER – TUESDAY 13TH SEPTEMBER 2011**

Participants: Mr. Fujihiro Ohnuma, President of the Association
Mrs. Minako Ohnuma, his wife
Mrs. Tsunako Horikoshi, Chairman of the Association, and Interpreter
Mrs. Kayoko Yasuda, Member, and homestay host
Mrs. Kazuko Ishida, Member since 1982 and homestay host.

Hosts: Mrs. Sue Haydock, Chairman Japan Group
Mrs. Pauline Yau, Member
Mr. Phillip and Mrs. Ann Livings, Members
Ashley Davis, Member/liaison with Medway Council
Mrs. Yuki Kushida, Member and Interpreter
William Edwards, previous exchange student

Friday 9th September: Mr. and Mrs. Ohnuma and Mrs. Ishida arrived early at Chatham Station and went directly to their hotel, the Ramada Encore, Chatham Dockyard. Pauline Yau and Sue Haydock joined them and then the party made an official visit to the Mayor in Gun Wharf. There was an exchange of gifts, and an opportunity to look at the economic development work taking place in Medway. Economic Management officer, Clem Smith gave a brief outline of the Council's economic support for local enterprises and new businesses. Photographs were taken.

The party then went to Rochester for a tour of the ancient city. Mrs. Horikoshi and Mrs. Yasuda arrived at Rochester Station and joined the latter part of the tour. Coffee was taken in the Rochester Coffee Co. and previous member, Michael Carson, in Rochester for shopping, and William Edwards, who was hosting Mrs. Ishida, joined us.

The whole party enjoyed an Italian meal in Rochester before returning to their hotel and homestay addresses.

Saturday 10th September: William Adams Festival Day. Drivers Pauline Yau and William Edwards delivered our visitors to Gillingham Park and Sue Haydock arrived with the items for the display put on by the Japan Group of the Medway International Relations Committee. All were wearing and looking very fine in kimono and yukata (summer cotton kimono).

A busy hour and a half was spent getting the display set up and ready, and then our visitors joined with the Mayor for the official opening.

Helping with the display and talking about their trip were this year's exchange students, Anjola Osifeso, Marcus Canning, Zachary Boswell and James Draper. Also helping were Ashley Davis and Elaine Higham.

The weather was blustery but stayed dry and became warm and sunny. The Japan Group display, which attracted a great deal of interest, included enlarged photographs of beautiful sculptures by Kenji Shigeoka, a very famous resident of Ito, information on the historical story of William Adams, and the links between Hirado, Ito and Yokosuka, and Gillingham, a photographic trail of twinning activities since inception in 1982, artefacts, and craft items. Our visitors brought and displayed a wide range of tourist information for the Spa City of Ito. Our visitors also brought with them a 'paper theatre' telling the story of William Adams. This was read by Mrs. Tsuyoko Page. The Paper Theatre is available for use in schools to spread the word about William Adams.

Following the festival the group visited Medway Park to look at the new sports facilities, St. Mary Magdalene Church, where priest-in-charge Suzanne Pattle showed us round, and then gathered at the Honourable Pilot, Gillingham for an evening meal.

Sunday, 11th September: William Edwards took Mr. and Mrs. Ohnuma and Mrs. Ishida to Canterbury for the day and to a favourite Indian restaurant in the evening. Sue Haydock took Mrs. Horikoshi and Mrs. Yasuda to Leeds Castle for the day where they saw jousting and birds of prey flying. In the evening Mr. and Mrs. Livings very kindly provided a traditional Sunday Roast for them and Sue Haydock and Peter Homewood.

Monday 12th September: Mrs. Ishida was taken to Rainham Station as the first part of her journey to Reity, Italy (another city twinned with Ito), via Stansted.

Sue Haydock collected Mr. and Mrs. Ohnuma and drove them to Rochester for a meeting at the Visitor Information Centre. Mrs. Horikoshi and Mrs. Yasuda used a taxi to take them to the Gordon Hotel, Rochester, where they were staying the night, in time to join the meeting. Tourism officer Ed Woollard was unable to join the meeting but sufficient information was provided for a useful and comprehensive discussion on further economic and cultural links between Medway and Ito. The outcome of the discussion will be the subject of a separate report.

Following the meeting, Sue Haydock took Mr. and Mrs. Ohnuma to Rochester station for the start of their journey back to Japan, via Heathrow. Sue then took Mrs. Horikoshi and Mrs. Yasuda on a tour of Rochester to cover the attractions they missed on Friday, and then out to Upnor Castle before being dropped back at their hotel.

They were hosted to an evening meal in The Atrium, Rochester, by Yuki Kushida.

Tuesday 13th September: Sue Haydock and Pauline Yau met at 9 a.m. at the Gordon Hotel in order to say farewell, and to load Sue's car with the cases prior to Mr. and Mrs. Ohnuma being driven to Rochester Station for their departure for Japan, from Heathrow.

It was good to see our friends again. Our visitors work very hard to provide homestay and the programme for our exchange students. Without them there would be no exchange.

Thanks are due to those members and supporters of the Japan Group, Medway, for all the help and assistance given over the weekend to ensure that our level of reciprocation was as much as we could offer, that all went well, and that the requests of our visitors were accommodated.

The visit was considered a success and all concluded that the Sister City Partnerships with Ito (and Yokosuka), which celebrate their 30th anniversary in 2012, are alive and well.



Marcus Canning: Zachary Boswell: Mr. Ohnuma: Anjola Osifeso:
Mrs. Horikoshi: Mrs. Yasuda: Mrs. Ishida: Mrs. Ohnuma: Patsy Hayward: Sue Haydock