



28 July 2010

Mr Brian Reed
Democratic Services Manager
Cheshire East Council
Westfields
Middlewich Road
Sandbach
Cheshire
CW11 1HZ

Dear Mr Reed

Town Twinning

Thank you for your letter of 13 July inviting comments on the Council's review of the policies and practices in respect of Twinning following the local government reorganisation. I am delighted that the Council is now in a position to review this matter having read with interest the report to Cabinet dated 14 July last year on this (Agenda item 16) together with helpful extracts and attachments from the Local Government Association.

If I may I will in my response give my views on the current position, the future as I see it, and also address the question of ongoing funding and support for Twinning.

I realise that this can be a controversial subject among some Council members and officers, particularly at this time of financial constraints, often because of prejudice or suspicions of abuse of public funds in the past, and I hope that, as Chairman of the Crewe and Nantwich Twinning Association (CANTA), I will do my best to allay those concerns.

Crewe has formal signed twinning arrangements with Macon (1958), Bischofsheim (1991) and a formal friendship agreement with Dzierzoniow - who are formally twinned with Bischofsheim(1996).

The original twinning agreements with macon and Bischofsheim were to further promotion of culture, social and economic relations and covered areas such as;

Culture
Sport and Tourism
Exchanges between young people
Education (school partnerships etc)
Environmental measures

Town planning and development
Solutions to traffic problems
Economic and business development
Local government and administration
Trades union interests

Twinning was largely devolved from the old Crewe and Nantwich Borough Council in 2004 when CANTA was set up to assist the council to achieve these aims and to reflect the organisation in our twin towns of Macon and Bischofsheim which already had twinning associations supported by their respective councils. The Council provided financial support via a small annual grant and continued to be involved both by having the Mayor of Crewe and Nantwich appointed as Hon President and by appointing a council member on the CANTA committee (see copy of Constitution attached). The day to day administration of twinning links and contacts was undertaken by CANTA except for occasions of formal visits and celebrations when CANTA worked closely with the Council to ensure that these were handled appropriately as twinning has always had a civic and individual & group element. In latter years the emphasis has rightly changed and CANTA has, since its formation, greatly strengthened the relationships between our twin towns and widened the participation of ordinary people in various initiatives. A summary of these is attached. There is of course much more that we wish to do and can be done but we operate with limited resource and rely on the goodwill of volunteers, on both sides of the Channel , all of whom are passionate about the benefits of twinning and about getting more people involved.

It must be stressed that none of the CANTA committee receive any payment or honoraria and that any visits undertaken by CANTA members are paid for from their own pocket. This enables all money received from the Council and from CANTA fundraising events to be devoted to supporting visits and initiatives for others between our twin towns. CANTA continues to operate to a properly defined constitution with minutes of meetings and audited statement of accounts and balance sheet.

Many of the objectives set out in your letter are reflected in our Consitution i.e personal, social, cultural, educational, recreational, civic and commercial links.

The links between our twin towns are extremely active and continue to grow, thanks to a great deal of enthusiasm from our twin towns and to a very dedicated and hard working committee and membership of CANTA (c 40 individual + corporate members). The list of events that we have arranged, facilitated and supported recently demonstrate the achievements that we have made and you will see how they fulfil the criteria of our foundation and many of the aims and objectives also of Cheshire East set out in your letter. Obviously I would be very happy to have support within the Council office to explore ways in which we could develop some of these further, also to receive further backing, as some requests from our twin towns are difficult to fulfil on our own.

The changing local government situation in Cheshire has left our twin towns very apprehensive about the future of our twinning links, especially in view of the huge progress we have made in recent years and the closeness of some of the contacts since they remain in part dependant on ongoing support. CANTA has tried to provide

assurance that we will do all that we can to continue the relationships, but are heavily reliant on the Council for funding. It is also vital that there remains an ongoing civic involvement, at special events in particular (at mayoral level at least?), but also in areas of information sharing and economic activity. The management committee of CANTA is proud of its contribution to twinning in the former Borough of Crewe and Nantwich and would wish to continue in the future when Cheshire East defines its policies and practices in this regard.

It is appreciated that Cheshire East as a body does not have any formal connections with European towns and that the links within the new authority are a legacy. Crewe does not have its own town council unlike Nantwich. CANTA would be happy to share its experience with other similar bodies within Cheshire East and work with officers and councillors to further its aims, but must concentrate on the long established links with Macon, Bishofsheim and Dzierzoniow which exist within the former Borough as so many initiatives have recently started, are in the pipeline, or have been established for some time.

Inevitably the business and economic elements have not had a high profile in recent years as CANTA comprises mainly people currently without the relevant expertise for this, however opportunities to develop these areas remain and were raised at a recent meeting by a delegation from Macon. South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce have also assisted as we regularly receive requests for work experience placements from France and Germany.

I, the members of CANTA, and the groups that we have started to support sincerely hope that Cheshire East will continue to provide backing and financial support to our twinning projects. It would be a real tragedy if all that we have worked so hard for and have built up over the last few years were to cease through lack of funding and will. We are constantly trying to pursue new contacts and links, particularly via schools and sporting and other groups and we need to offer some pump priming or financial support with travel to continue with these get some new ones off the ground.. Our grant has not increased since our inception and I am lead to believe that a budget previously set aside for twinning by the former Crewe and Nantwich Borough Council has been transferred to the new authority. I would like to suggest that this sum, in the region of c £12,000 be transferred to CANTA on an annual basis to further develop the areas outlined above and in the appendix. To ensure probity this can be monitored by a Cheshire East council representative on our committee (currently Cllr Betty Howell) and by annual report and accounts (as currently) and could be reviewed in, say 3 years, checking on progress with these aims.

Currently at least 7 Cheshire East Council members from the old Crewe and Nantwich area are very aware of CANTA's activity and have been supportive in the past. I am sure I can rely on them, although you always get the odd dissenter who doesn't rely understand what it's all about. As always, I am happy to provide further information or background or to discuss further.

Yours sincerely



Clive Mosby, Chairman, CANTA

Brief Summary of CANTA's recent achievements

Developed logo by open competition

Involved South Cheshire College initially in developing website

Promotion of CANTA

in local press, Crewe Carnival, Nantwich Show, Council Offices, Libraries, letters and visits to schools, talks to youth groups, South Cheshire French Circle, interviews on Radio Stoke, mailing to local business. Subscribed (FOC) to Town Twinning Portal, siting of signpost in Crewe town centre

Supported Visits by

Crewe Male Voice Choir to Bischofsheim and Dzierzoniow

Nantwich Choral Society to Macon

Co-op Brass band to Bischofsheim

Guy Harvey footballers to Dzierzoniow (& vice versa)

Dzierzoniow scouts to Crewe & Nantwich (return visit pending)

Firefighters to Bischofsheim

Annual visit of Macon Engineering students

Visit of Guides to Bischofsheim pending

Set up

Web cam links for pupil-pupil dialogue between schools in Crewe & Macon

e-twinning between schools in Crewe & Bischofsheim

1st English Language Summer School in Crewe & Nantwich for participants from our twin towns comprising lessons and visits to local sites of interest

Facilitated

Art competition with Dzierzoniow library

Photographic competition with Macon

Support of French language summer school in Macon

Requests for work experience & au pairing placements

Requests for Rugby & Badminton teams to Macon

Major events

15th anniversary Crewe & Nantwich/Bischofsheim 2006

50th anniversary Crewe & Nantwich/Macon 2007

Delegation to mark the end of Crewe and Nantwich Borough 2009

Various social & fundraising events , Hoe Down, annual dinner, concerts, duck race

20th anniversary Crewe & Nantwich/Bischofsheim – next year.