

MINUTES OF THE ARTS AND INFORMATION COMMITTEE HELD ON 5TH JANUARY, 2016

Present: Councillor E Bell (Chair) and
Councillors B Allen, Mrs B E Allen,
R Arthur, Mrs M R Baird, Mrs J A Bell,
Mrs G Bleasdale, B Burn Snr, B Burn Jnr,
S Cudlip, R Meir, Miss S Morrison,
N R Page, C Snowball, B Taylor,
R Whitehead.

Apologies: Councillor Mrs S Forster, I Paul,
K Younger

1. CHAIRMAN

In the absence of the Chair and Vice-Chair of this Committee, Councillor E Bell was nominated to take the Chair at this meeting.

(Councillor E Bell in the Chair)

Prior to commencement of the meeting the Chair advised members of this Committee and members of the public that in line with the amendment to 'the public bodies (admission to meetings) act 1960', which came into force in August, 2014, parts of this meeting may be recorded by photographic, video and audio means.

2. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Members were reminded prior to the start of the meeting of the need to disclose any interests prejudicial or personal, in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

3. PRESENTATION – SEAHAM U3A

The Chair welcomed the following members of the Seaham Harbour U3A, Sandra Wilkinson, Jean Watson, Jean Mullen, Malcolm Wilkinson and Pamela Burke who were in attendance to provide Members with information on their project to link with Gerlingen and participate in the Twinning trip in September 2016.

Ms Wilkinson began by thanking the Town Council for the opportunity to attend the meeting and that it was now 18 months since they had started to work on a link with Gerlingen. She advised that the Seaham Harbour U3A now has 130 members, which has helped to set up a second group called Seaham & District U3A so there are now, in Seaham, over 200 people involved in the U3A project. The U3A is an international organisation for people in their "third age" i.e. retired or semi-retired who wish to keep fit and healthy by keeping mentally alert and getting involved in different activities.

One of those activities is this group who wish to forge links with Gerlingen and they are aware of the experience the Town Council has in Twinning over the past 28 years. The Group have already met some of the Gerlingen group who came to Seaham in April 2015 and they would welcome the opportunity to get to know more

people from Gerlingen. They have kept in touch mainly with Andrea Lohle who has helped as a translator and she has been trying to identify similar aged people in Gerlingen so that further links can be made. When some of the U3A go in September 2016 they hope to be able to take part in some of the activities and perhaps have a stall or part of a stall at the Strassenfest to display information on the 25 interest groups within the Seaham Harbour U3A. The interest groups cover topics such as photography, reading, cooking which would be able to provide an interesting visual display highlighting what the group is achieving in Seaham.

To give Members an understanding of the kind of projects the interest groups work on Ms Wilkinson circulated the 2016 calendar they had produced which included photographs taken by members of the group and which had been sent to Gerlingen recently. The group also wishes to link with young people and already has links with a Houghton Kieper school. In partnership with pupils of the school a cookbook has been produced. The group have been taught how to prepare certain meals by pupils of the school and this is to be reciprocated soon and it was felt that cookery would be one of many excellent subjects/interests in which to engage similarly with Gerlingen.

The group would also like to establish a link with a German university which although they don't have U3A specifically they do have programmes specifically for older people. They have begun fundraising to help with the costs of the trip in September and are holding a social event in the masonic hall on the 19th March which is open to all to attend in support of the group. It is felt that whatever links the group create will not only benefit their interest group but will also be of benefit to the whole of the Seaham harbour U3A and therefore all members wished to support the fundraising. The group had also won £250 in a competition by Newcastle University which was to be used to help fund the trip.

At this point comments and questions were invited and the following questions were asked:

- (i) *A Member asked if the group had a particular university which they intended to approach i.e. Stuttgart.*

Ms Wilkinson confirmed that somewhere close to Gerlingen such as Stuttgart was most likely and she had contacted the U3A national office who said they had had real difficulty forging links with anywhere in Germany. They provided a contact name at Stuttgart university and Ms Wilkinson informed them that Seaham already had a well-established link. She then went on to say that the group were open to any ideas/offers.

- (ii) *A Member asked if the group had anyone who was a Sunderland university graduate because Sunderland University has links with Stuttgart university and perhaps the Alumni office would be able to provide some help in who to contact at Stuttgart.*

Mr Wilkinson informed Members that the regional U3A had organised the competition two years ago which the group had placed 3rd and won £250 for

their idea of setting up links with Gerlingen their home town's twin town with a view to looking at what was available for older and possibly younger people between the two communities. He went on to say that when the group go in September they haven't settled their final dates yet as they are intending to go before the main Twinning group arrive so that they can spend at least a day in Stuttgart hopefully meeting the appropriate person.

- (iii) *The Chair stated that the Twinning Group has been going for approximately 28 years and the strength of it is all going together and being there as part of a unit group. We have a range of organised trips while we are there and we're happy for that to continue. There is therefore a concern that if another group goes to Gerlingen and travels in a separate way possibly at a different time to the main Twinning group then that might undermine what the Town Council are trying to achieve. It was then asked why the group was intending to travel independently and not with the main group.*

Mr Wilkinson stated that U3A group weren't intending to go at a completely different time than the main Twinning Group as this was felt to be the ideal time to be there to be part of the Strassenfest and the other activities but not to detract from those who have actually gone on the exchange. That's why they thought a day or two earlier would be preferable as they also intend to fly and wouldn't be asking for anyone to help them find accommodation as they would be arranging all of that themselves so that nothing was being taken away from the actual exchange itself.

- (iv) *The Chair stated that a further conversation was needed about the whole Twinning programme and what the aims and objectives of the U3A were in relation to that. It was acknowledged that this was the first tentative step.*
- (v) *A Member then stated that it was lovely what the U3A group were planning but that it would be preferable for it to be planned so that the group become part of the Twinning travelling with the main group.*

Ms Wilkinson responded informing Members that group would overlap with the main group and be with it for a short period of the visit and that the preference to fly was because certain members of the U3A were unable to travel such a long distance by coach and that idea of travelling a day early was to enable an approach to be made to the university and not to impinge on the regular programme.

- (vi) *Members acknowledged that a number of the regular Twinners now also have to fly for personal reasons.*

Ms Wilkinson stated that the group has an aspiration that all interest groups will eventually have links with Gerlingen and able to correspond using modern technology such as internet video and voice messaging.

- (vii) *The Chair highlighted that it was important that the work of the group to establish a links continues but also that the Town Council needs to*

have a further discussion on what it considers to be the needs and wants in relation to the whole Twinning arrangement.

At this point the Chair thanked Ms Wilkinson and the other members of the Seaham Harbour U3A for their informative address and they then left the meeting.

RECOMMENDED this item is deferred for consideration to the next meeting.

4. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 24TH NOVEMBER, 2015

RECOMMENDED the Minutes of this meeting, a copy of which had been previously printed and circulated to each Member, be approved and signed as a correct record by the Chairman.

5. CONFERENCE APPOINTMENTS

RECOMMENDED the list of conference appointments a copy of which had been previously circulated, be approved.

6. CONFERENCES, COURSES AND SEMINARS

a) Conference Evaluation Forms

The Committee considered the Conference Evaluation Form, completed by the Council's two delegates who attended the Annual General Meeting and Humanitarian Support Conference at Harrogate, organised by the National Association of Councillors.

RECOMMENDED the Council accept the reports.

b) HR Training – Handling Conflict through Mediation

The Committee considered details of a two day training course being organised by the North East Regional Employers' Organisation on Tuesday, 1st March and Wednesday, 2nd March, 2016 at a venue yet to be decided.

RECOMMENDED authority be granted for the Town Clerk to attend the training course on Tuesday, 1st March and Wednesday, 2nd March, 2016 and that when the training course is ran again in the future that authority be granted for the Deputy Town Clerk to attend at that time.

7. MACMILLAN CANCER SUPPORT – 10TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

The Committee considered an invitation for Elected Members to attend the tenth birthday celebration of the Macmillan Cancer Support Information and Support Centre of the County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust to be held in Peterlee on the afternoon of 22nd January, 2016.

RECOMMENDED any Councillor who wishes to attend this event to notify the General Office so that the relevant numbers can be advised to the Centre in advance of the event.

8. EAST DURHAM HERITAGE GROUP

The Committee considered correspondence from the East Durham Heritage Group which provided details of their two current projects, a memorial statue to RNLI Seaham and the rebuilding of the Trimmers Hut which stood next to the George Elmy Lifeboat House Heritage Centre. The Group are applying to the Arts Council for funding and in order to support their application they requested the help of the Town Council as they need to be able to demonstrate community acceptance of public art and felt they could draw on the success of the 1101 Tommy sculpture. In discussion Members felt a suitably worded letter of support for the projects would be appropriate and that it should highlight that the loss of the lifeboat resulted in support both at a local and national level and the creation of a trust fund to provide financial help to the families of those who had lost their lives.

RECOMMENDED that a letter of support from the Town Council be provided to the Group.

9. RISK ASSESSMENTS – ARTS AND INFORMATION ISSUES

The Council was reminded of the requirement as part of the corporate governance arrangements, for risk assessments to be undertaken in relation to various activities. At regular intervals Members had been provided with reports on progress made in this area and the Committee was advised of the process involved in carrying out initial assessments made of risks in a range of arts and information activities. The Committee noted the process followed in assessing the risks.

RECOMMENDED the Council formally agree to accept the risk assessments covering the various items now reported.

10. PRESS OPPORTUNITIES

RECOMMENDED the Council note that no press opportunities existed from this meeting.