

## LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

**Meeting of the Standards Committee - 6 April 2005**

**Report from Borough Solicitor**

For action

Wards affected:  
All

**REPORT TITLE : TWINNING WITH SOUTH DUBLIN COUNTY COUNCIL**

### 1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report deals with the role of the London Borough of Brent's Mayor's Office in organising twinning visits.
- 1.2 The current twinning guidance (**attached**) is in need of updating. Members of the Standards Committee are invited to comment on the purpose of twinning, what expenses can reasonably be claimed, guidance on conduct and gifts and the protocol on officers and members accompanying the Brent Mayor on twinning visits.
- 1.3 The aim of the new guidance is to ensure that twinning activity supported by London Borough of Brent is of a high quality and makes effective use of resources.

### 2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Standards Committee note the existing guidance and contribute ideas for the revised edition of the guidance on twinning.

### 3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

#### 4.0

- 3.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

### 4.0 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no direct staffing implications arising from this report.

## **5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Members are subject to the Brent Code of Conduct. This applies whenever the member is undertaking official duties. The Code of Conduct will therefore apply when the Mayor and other councillors participate in a twinning visit either overseas or in Brent and must be carefully observed.

## **6.0 DETAIL**

- 6.1. The Preamble to the Treaty of Rome states that member states of the European Community are determined to lay the foundations of an even closer union amongst the peoples of Europe. To meet that objective of bringing citizens closer together the European Commission introduced a program to support town twinning schemes as a valuable way of involving people and their elected representatives in European integration. The basis on which twinning proposals can be developed includes objectives for the development of co-operation between the communities involved as well as cultural exchanges, the promotion of tourism, artistic, musical, economic and industrial projects.
- 6.2 Brent has been twinned with South Dublin County Council since 5 September 1997. Brent has the largest Irish born population in mainland Britain.
- 6.3 South Dublin and the London Borough of Brent agreed to enter into twinning arrangements on the basis of their common geographical, historical, cultural and trading links and their wish to continue to develop those links for the mutual benefit of the councils and their communities. They wish to foster and develop mutual understanding and respect between the people of South Dublin and Brent and to encourage and assist youth and adult organisations, clubs, companies, groups and all persons and organisations in South Dublin and Brent to take part in this twinning agreement.
- 6.4 Members of the Standards Committee are invited to consider the existing guidance on twinning visits and the rules which should govern a twinning visit to ensure the appropriate use of resources including, but not limited to, the following issues:
- Purpose of twinning
  - Limits of costs of transport, accommodation, food/ refreshments, entertainment.
  - What personal expenses can be claimed?
  - Officers and other members accompanying the Mayor
  - Chain of office and Robes
  - Gifts
  - Maintaining political neutrality
  - Reporting following visits
  - Member's spouse

6.5 The current Mayor and Deputy Mayor are being consulted on the guidance.

## **7.0 Background Information**

- Current Twinning Guidance

Any persons wishing to inspect the papers in connection with the above proposals should contact:

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## **Twinning guidance**

### **Purpose**

1. This document sets out the role of Mayor's Office in organising twinning visits, the purpose of the twinning budget, what expenses can be claimed and the protocol on officers and members accompanying the Mayor on twinning visits.

### **Background**

2. The Borough has been twinned with South Dublin County Council since 1997. Since then Brent has had little involvement in twinning (the post of European Officer was deleted in 19XX) with the exception of visits by the Mayors of the respective councils. The last of these visits took place in April 2003. Since then the Mayor of South Dublin was invited in March 2004, but had to cancel at the last minute due to a visit to their region by the Irish Prime Minister.

### **Role of Mayor's Office in organising twinning visits**

3. For a visit to Brent the Mayor's Office co-ordinates the visit and organises an itinerary. In the past the visitors have been invited for a weekend usually when a Mayoral function is taking place (e.g. the Mayor's ball).

4. The itinerary usually includes a reception in the Mayor's Parlour to which the leader, leaders of opposition groups, executive members and any relevant local community leaders are invited. A visit of Brent (the Mandir, Wembley Stadium etc) is organised for one afternoon and for at least one evening both Mayors have dinner together. Usually some free time is built into the programme for the visitors to go shopping or visit central London. An example of a previous programme is attached.

5. For a visit to South Dublin the Mayor's Office organises air tickets for the Mayor and Mayoress (or Consort). Once over in Ireland the Mayor and Mayoress (or Consort) are looked after by the hosts.

### **Purpose of the twinning budget**

6. The purpose of the twinning budget is twofold. Firstly to provide funds for the Mayor and Mayoress (or Consort) to travel to the twin borough and secondly to provide funds to pay for expenses while the visitors from the twin borough are staying in Brent. The protocol is that the receiving borough pays for expenses of the guests once they arrive in their country.

7. For a visit to Brent the twinning budget would normally be used for:

Transport:	- Hire of a people carrier type vehicle to transport the visitors from the airport and around the borough - Possible hire of an additional driver if two vehicles are needed
Accommodation:	- Room(s) to be booked at a local hotel for the party for the duration of the stay
Food/ Refreshments:	- All meals plus reasonable drinks
Entertainment:	- Any entertainment also to be paid for out of budget

8. For a visit to South Dublin expenditure incurred by Brent is for return air tickets to Dublin and if necessary travel to and from the hotel. This budget would also be used to provide additional insurance for the Mayor's Chain of Office if it is taken on the trip.

#### **What personal expenses can be claimed?**

9. It is not normally expected that any personal expenses would be claimed. As stated above it is the responsibility of the hosts to provide all accommodation, meals and refreshments. Any expenditure such as refreshments must be paid by the Mayors themselves out of their own personal allowance.

10. In the unlikely event that any additional expenditure has to be incurred, this must be agreed in advance of the visit by the Mayor's Office Manager.

#### **Officers and Members accompanying the Mayor**

11. Officers are not normally expected to accompany the Mayor. Occasionally it may be necessary for the Mayor's attendant to accompany the Mayor where agreed with the Mayor's Office Manager. The Chain of Office can be taken to South Dublin provided insurance is obtained beforehand.

12. In some circumstances other members may be invited by the hosts. However the twinning budget can not be used to pay for other members. Members must pay for their own tickets and if necessary their own accommodation and expenses while visiting the twin.