

Leicester
City Council

WARDS AFFECTED:
All Wards

FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:

Overseas Links Working Party

Cabinet

Full Council

15th March 2006

24th April 2006

... May 2006

Twinning with Haskovo, Bulgaria

Report of the Corporate Director, Regeneration and Culture

1. Purpose of Report

This report proposes a formal twinning relationship between Leicester City Council and the Municipality of Haskovo in September 2006.

2. Summary

2.1 The City Council has been in frequent contact with Haskovo for over five years. In November 2005, the Lord Mayor signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Municipality of Haskovo, and there have been meetings at ambassadorial level, both at the British Embassy in Sofia and the Bulgarian Embassy in London about developing a formal twinning between Leicester City Council and the Municipality of Haskovo. There is an expectation at ambassadorial level that an official twinning will take place between the two cities in September 2006.

2.2 The Overseas Links Working Party meeting on 25th January 2006 resolved that formal twinning be the subject of a wider consultation.

3. Recommendations

3.1 Cabinet are recommended to refer this report to Full Council and recommend to Full Council that formal twinning takes place between Leicester City Council and the Municipality of Haskovo from September 2006.

4. Financial and Legal Implications

4.1 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Martin Judson, Head of Finance – ext. 7390.

4.2 Legal Implications

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

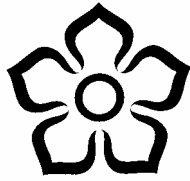
Guy Goodman, Head of Community Services Law - ext 7054.

5. Report Authors:

Sandra Rieger
International Development Officer
Ext. 6756
sandra.rieger@leicester.gov.uk

DECISION STATUS

Key Decision	No
Reason	Part of Policy and Budget framework
Appeared in Forward Plan	Yes
Executive or Council Decision	Council



Leicester
City Council

WARDS AFFECTED:
All Wards

FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:

Overseas Links Working Party
Cabinet
Full Council

15th March 2006
24th April 2006
... May 2006

Twinning with Haskovo, Bulgaria

Report of the Corporate Director, Regeneration and Culture

1. Contact with Haskovo to date

- 1.1 The Haskovo region is located in the Southeast region of Bulgaria, between the Rodhopi and Stara Planina Mountains, and comprises around 740.22 square kilometers. The region includes the town of Haskovo Municipality, the regional centre and thirty-five villages.
- 1.2 The population of the Haskovo region is 104,692, approximately 82% of whom live in the town of Haskovo. The main arterial route linking Europe and the Middle-East passes through Haskovo and the town is connected by four of the trans-European Transit corridors.
- 1.3 The first contact with Haskovo Municipality was made when Leicester City Council's Gypsy Liaison Officer met the Roma community there following a private visit to Varna on the Black Sea in May 2001. The Roma community had been forcibly resettled into grim low-rise housing in a district of Haskovo and she raised the question of a fire risk with the Vice-Chair of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Combined Fire Authority. Subsequently the Combined Fire Authority resolved to send redundant fire engines to Haskovo, where they were well received.
- 1.4 In 2001, Leicester City Council signed a memorandum offering technical assistance to Haskovo. The collaboration between Leicester and Haskovo has stimulated a lot of local interest and produced valuable opportunities for councillors and officers on both sides to explore opportunities. Projects undertaken so far have included:
 - Visits by the Mayor of Haskovo Municipality, Dipl. Eng. Georgi Ivanov and the Regional Municipalities' association Maritza to Leicester;
 - Visit of the City Council's Gypsy Liaison Officer, Mrs Pauline Burton, to various projects in Haskovo and Varna to share best practice on the integration of socially marginalised groups;

- Donation of forty Pentium computers by the Leicester North West Computer Recycling project 'Get Connected @ Home' to schools and Council offices in Haskovo. One of the computers was equipped with special software to help young people at the Giordano Bruno Observatory with their astronomy studies;
- Gift of surplus fire tenders and other firefighting equipment by Leicestershire Fire & Rescue Service to the Haskovo region Fire Department;
- Exchange of learning and expertise in the fields of economic development, social inclusion, social housing, education, training and the environment;
- Visit by the Deputy Chief Constable of Leicestershire to Haskovo to share good practice on neighbourhood policing, evidence gathering and the use of computer technology;
- Visit by the Leicestershire Chamber of Commerce and Industry to explore bilateral trade opportunities;
- Donation of Pentium computers to a school in Republika, a deprived neighbourhood of Haskovo. The school has now set up a computer suite, providing pupil access to ICT facilities. This was achieved through a partnership between Leicester City Council and Konnect9, a charity based in Leicester.

1.5 In September 2005, the Mayor of Haskovo, Mr Georgi Ivanov, invited a delegation from Leicester. The delegation included the Lord Mayor of Leicester, Cllr Mary Draycott, and Cllr Michael Johnson who was representing the Overseas Links Committee and the City of Leicester European Twinning Association. The delegation attended the 'Haskovo Week' celebrations, which included a 'Leicester Day'. The visit built on cultural links, public service co-operation and trading opportunities.

1.6 In November 2005, a delegation from Haskovo visited Leicester. The delegation included:

- Mr Georgi Ivanov, the Mayor of Haskovo Municipality and the Chairman of the Regional Municipalities Association (RMA) Maritza;
- Mrs Rayna Yovcheva, the Regional Governor, Haskovo Region;
- Mr Dimiter Veltev, Chairman of Haskovo Municipal Council;
- Ms Anna Nenova, Coordinator "International Partnerships and Projects", Regional Municipalities Association (RMA) Maritza;
- Mr Boyko Boev, Member of Bulgarian Parliament;
- Mr Uday Dholakia, as UK representative of RMA Maritza.

1.7 On 15th November, the Lord Mayor of Leicester Cllr Mary Draycott and the Mayor of Haskovo Dipl. Eng. Georgi Ivanov, signed a joint Memorandum of Understanding in the presence of his Excellency Mr Jeremy Hill, British Ambassador to Bulgaria and his Excellency Dr Lachzar Matev, Ambassador for the Republic of Bulgaria. Both cities believe that the establishment of such cooperation will serve their common interest and contribute to the enhancement of the economic and social development of the people of both communities.

1.8 The Local Government International Bureau has praised our work with Haskovo as exemplary and has used examples of the work undertaken so far as case study material.

2. Future contacts

- 2.1 A conference to exchange best practice in housing development took place in Haskovo on 17th and 18th March 2006. The conference, which was supported by the British Ambassador to Bulgaria, was hosted by the Regional Governor of the Haskovo region and involved representatives from the municipalities members of the Regional Association of Municipalities “Maritza”. The conference was attended by Cllr Metcalfe, Martin Clewlow (Landlord Services Manager) and Ian Craig (Contracts Manager) from the City Council’s Housing Department. The cost of the visit was met by the Housing Department. This housing conference was delivered in the context of previous technical work undertaken by Housing and Social Care & Health. Previously, the City Council’s Sheltered Housing Manager, who was one of two local housing specialists, visited Haskovo as part of a UK drive to help develop housing and social care services in Bulgaria.
- 2.2 In February 2006, Haskovo Municipality submitted an application for funding to the European Union. The bid is for a grant towards the cost of a twinning conference in Haskovo in September 2006.
- 2.3 There have been meetings at ambassadorial level, both at the British Embassy in Sofia and the Bulgarian Embassy in London about developing a formal twinning between Leicester City Council and the Municipality of Haskovo. There is an expectation at ambassadorial level that an official twinning will take place between the two cities in September 2006.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 Cabinet are recommended to refer this report to Full Council and recommend to Full Council that formal twinning takes place between Leicester City Council and the Municipality of Haskovo from September 2006.

4. Financial and Legal Implications

4.1 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.
Martin Judson, Head of Finance – ext. 7390.

4.2 Legal Implications

None.
Guy Goodman, Head of Community Services Law - ext 7054.

5. Other Implications

OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/NO	PARAGRAPH REFERENCES WITHIN SUPPORTING INFORMATION
Equal Opportunities	No	There are no implications arising from this report
Policy	Yes	The work with Haskovo links with the International Development Strategy
Sustainability & Environment	No	There are no implications arising from this report
Crime & Disorder	No	There are no implications arising from this report
Human Rights Act	No	There are no implications arising from this

		report
Elderly/People on Low Income	No	There are no implications arising from this report

Risk Assessment Matrix

	Risk	Likelihood L/M/H	Severity Impact L/M/H	Control Actions (if necessary/or appropriate)
1	Human rights and the protection of minorities	L	L	Further efforts are needed, in particular for the integration of the Roma minority. We are working with the authorities to overcome these issues.
2	Corruption	L	L	While efforts to combat corruption have had a certain impact, widespread corruption continues to be a cause for concern. We need to monitor and work with the authorities to overcome these issues.
3	Human trafficking	L	L	The institutional framework to combat human trafficking has been reinforced with the creation of the National Anti-Trafficking Commission and a National Programme on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings.

L - Low
M - Medium
H - High

L - Low
M - Medium
H - High

The above are risks to the twinning link associated with a place where there are problems, however we are working with the authorities to overcome some of these issues. One of the key reasons we are pursuing this link is to help Haskovo to achieve the necessary changes in preparation for EU membership next year.

More information about these issues can be found in the European Commission's Comprehensive Monitoring Report (October 25, 2005) available from the following website: http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/bulgaria/key_documents.htm

6. **Background Papers – Local Government Act 1972**

International Development Strategy, Regeneration & Culture, 2003

7. **Consultations**

- Martin Judson, Head of Finance – ext. 7390.
- Guy Goodman, Head of Community Services Law - ext. 7054

8. **Report Authors:**

Sandra Rieger
International Development Officer

Ext. 6756

sandra.rieger@leicester.gov.uk