

The Charter Trustees of the Town of Taunton

A proposal to continue support for Taunton's Twin Towns

The Town of Taunton has two 'twin towns' – Lisieux in France and Konigslutter in Germany. The former twinning has been in existence for well over 60 years whilst the latter was formed in 1995.

Each twinning has a support group; the Taunton-Lisieux Civic Link and the Friends of Konigslutter and both operate on the basis of bi-annual visits to France or Germany taking place, with return visits occurring the year after.

Prior to the formation of Somerset West and Taunton Council, Taunton Deane Borough Council (TDBC) provided a degree of funding each year to both of these groups to perpetuate the twinning arrangements. Without a degree of funding there is little doubt the twinning groups would be seriously compromised with little prospect of them being able to continue after a relatively short time.

The funding comprised a grant of £1,000 per annum to the Taunton-Lisieux Civic Link which was used to provide trips for the French visitors to local and regional landmarks during their stay in Taunton. In addition, the Council had borne the cost of the attendance of the French visitors at the Civic Dinner which was attended by TDBC's Mayor.

A grant was not made to the Friends of Konigslutter as they undertook much of their own fund-raising. However, in recent years such fund-raising has become more and more difficult. It should be noted that TDBC did meet some of the costs associated with the Civic Dinner held in honour of the German visitors.

With the formation of the new Council and a number of other well-established twinning arrangements across the enlarged area, the support given to Taunton's twin towns in the past cannot be continued, as to do so will be seen as unfair on the other twinning groups elsewhere in the area.

As such, it is suggested that the limited cost of supporting both twinning organisations in Taunton should, in future, be derived from the Special Expenses precept levied in the Unparished Area.

This matter was discussed at the final meeting of the Taunton Unparished Area Committee held on 30 January 2019. The Councillors present at this meeting accepted that a degree of financial support ought to be provided to the twinning groups in future especially if Charter Trustees for Taunton were put in place. There was a view however that both groups should be treated in exactly the same way in future.

In the circumstances, the Charter Trustees are requested to consider making financial contributions to the Taunton-Lisieux Civic Link and the Friends of Konigslutter on the following basis:-

- (a) The sum of £1,000 per annum be awarded to each of the twinning groups from funding derived from the Special Expenses Precept levied on households in the Taunton Unparished Area; and
- (b) The further sum of up to £1,500 be made available to meet the cost of hosting the French or German visitors attending the Civic Dinners held in their honour. Should this amount be exceeded, the twinning group concerned will be expected to meet the balance of the overall cost.

Note : In any financial year there is only one visit from either France or Germany. Therefore in Year 1 if Taunton receives visitors from Lisieux (usually towards the end of May), a party from Taunton will travel to Germany to visit Konigslutter in August. In Year 2, the visits are reversed.

This means that in any one year, the amount of funding needed to support the twinning groups will be no more than £3,500.