



Notes of the meeting of the EUROPEAN/INTERNATIONAL ISSUES SEMINAR held on THURSDAY 8 JULY 1999 at 6.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Offices

Present: Councillor Irons (Chair)
Councillors Barton, Conchie, Gibbs, Kilkenny, Legg, McCall and Newcombe

Officers: Milton Keynes Council

D Jones (Strategic Director Neighbourhood Services), J Best (Strategic Director Environment), D Cooper (Economy and Learning Manager), H Rees (European Project Assistant), A Corbett (Competitive Bidding Officer), T Lamming (Regeneration Officer), M Moore (Senior Planning Officer), D Taylor (Assistant Economic Development Officer), J Draper (Energy Conservation Officer) and S Parker (Committee Administrator)

Outside Officers

and Presenters: R Clarke - Milton Keynes World Development Education Centre
A Hamilton - Milton Keynes World Development Education Centre
A Skennerton - School Link
J Flemming - Westminster Foundation
J Burnipp - Wavendon Twinning
D Greaves - On the Line Project
K Harris - MKIPA
S Handley - LGIB

Apologies: Councillors Edwards, Fairweather, I Henderson, Hopkins, Mabbutt and K Wilson
Howard Miller (Chief Executive)

1.0 INTRODUCTION BY CHAIR OF ECONOMY AND LIFELONG LEARNING COMMITTEE, COUNCILLOR JANET IRONS

Councillor Irons welcomed Members, officers and speakers to the European/International Issues Seminar which was the second Seminar arranged to promote discussion and seek ways ahead in developing the Council's European/International Strategy.

2.0

ROMANIAN LINKS - JIM FLEMMING - WESTMINSTER FOUNDATION

Mr Flemming made the following comments:

1. The Westminster Foundation, which he represented, was a Foreign Office funded organisation which encouraged the three main political parties to form links with emerging European democracies. Visits to these countries had been arranged on a single as well as cross party basis to look at governance issues.
2. He had recently returned following a Conservative Party Group meeting with the PNTCD which is the Democratic Convention Peasants Party which is the leading party in the Coalition Government of Romania.
3. The aim of the visit was as interchanges to aid in strengthening emerging democracies.
4. Mr Flemming provided details of Brasov (Transylvania) County Council, as follows.

There were 41 elected Councillors with a Chairman and a consecutive board comprising 7 directors.

The departments at Brasov County Council were as follows:

- Co-ordination Department (co-ordinates the local Mayors within the County)
 - Economic Department
 - Technical Department
 - Patrimonial Department (various caring functions including child protection)
 - City Management
 - Legal Affairs
 - Urban and Architecture
5. The priorities of Brasov County Council were as follows:
 - Develop a modern road system
 - To build an airport to facilitate tourist and business travel
 - To modernise telecommunications network
 - To modernise water supply and reconstruct sewage system
 - To develop a modern administrative base and a set of regulations and instructions
 - To reform the medical and health systems

- To improve public cultural institutions and extend interim cultural exchanges
 - To reconsider tourist potential
 - To review and improve ecological standards
6. Mr Fleming emphasised the common interests with Milton Keynes (possible trade, sharing expertise) and the differences (Brasov has 11.2% ethnic minorities, mainly Hungarian and lacks many amenities. He felt contact between the areas would be beneficial.
 7. His trip had lasted 7 days and had involved him in attending a seminar on Women's Role in Contemporary Society as well as the regular press conference held as part of the County Council's commitment to Open Government.
 8. A recent visit of 3 dignitaries from Romania had been entertained by the Mayor included 2 MPs and the Chair of the Institute for Business. It was hoped that further visits could include ordinary members of the community.
 9. Romania was seeking Membership of the EU which it felt was essential to its future.

3.0 WAVENDON TWINNING - JAN BURNIPP

The Committee of Wavendon Twinning Association was formed in 1988. The object of the Twinning Association was to:

1. Promote and foster friendship and understanding.
2. Encourage cultural recreational and educational activities and visits.

The villages exchange visits take place twice a year. They had had a variety of benefits for the people involved and the Committee was flourishing.

The Twinning Association had had valuable support from the Stables and also took part in fund raising in order to carry out its activities. They also receive EU funding and LGIB support for the activity.

Links with schools have been formed.

4.0 MK INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP ASSOCIATION AND GLOBAL CENTRE ON THE LINE PROJECT - DEBBIE GREAVES

1. The On The Line project funded by Oxfam, the World Wildlife Fund and Channel 4 had been established to promote international understanding with countries on the Zero Meridian Line, for example Ghana and Algeria.
2. The On The Line Project in Milton Keynes was promoting school links between Milton Keynes and schools in Ghana.

3. A promotional video was shown at the meeting. The On The Line project aimed to promote:
 - Learning
 - Linking
 - Celebration
 - Taking Part
4. The aim of the project was to foster understanding between individuals in schools in Ghana and Milton Keynes with a view to celebrating cultural diversity, sharing skills, values and attitude. The Seminar noted a festival which was being held at Bradwell Abbey.
5. That the project is promoted nationally by John Snow from Channel 4 News and others.
6. The project supported national government policy. The Department for International Development (DfID) had recently published a report calling on schools and others to develop international links.

5.0

PRESENTATION BY KEN HARRIS - MKIPA

1. Ken Harris outlined school links with India. He believed MK Schools had two of the longest standing links with developing countries.
2. Stantonbury Campus had a mutual exchange link with Tanzania stretching back to 1979 and Ousedale School has had links since 1982 with schools in India.
3. The Seminar noted that many students involved in the exchanges found it a seminal experience. Schools and other departments in the Council had also benefited.
4. Exchanges had been part funded by the Commonwealth Youth Exchange.

6.0

SUSAN HANDLEY - LGIB

The Seminar noted that the LGIB (Local Government International Bureau) provided an interface between Central and Local Government on international issues. It provided a service in interpreting policies and provided feedback of the views of local authorities.

The Association provided the following services:

- Help in increasing and improving links
- Helping Twinning Associations look for partners
- Providing advice on twinning and other links
- Helping with the filling out of grant applications

- Providing a free news service

Susan Handley congratulated Milton Keynes Council on developing an International Strategy which she felt was most important. There were many reasons why Milton Keynes should reach out to international links and she pointed out the benefits provided by the links that Liverpool has with Shanghai, New York and Dublin; and the links Bristol has with Hanover in Germany.

Links have a number of benefits:

- Educational benefits (curriculum related in many ways)
- Informative exchange (e.g. on how to tackle pollution)
- Youth exchange projects (which improve self confidence)
- Community development (as people look at their own communities in a new way)
- Economic exchanges (including trade development)
- Social/welfare benefits (by customising links between communities)
- Sporting links (which break down barriers)
- Tourism links (to enhance visitor attraction to a place)

The Seminar noted that links cost little but enables the Council and the community to access pockets of money from the EU.

6.0

CLOSING REMARKS FROM JANET IRONS

Councillor Irons thanked all parties for attending and felt that it had been another productive seminar.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 8.00 PM