

## KEY POINTS FROM MKIPA CONSULTATION MEETING ON THE EUROPEAN/INTERNATIONAL POLICY AND STRATEGY

### 1. Points from speakers

**The following points conflate comments made. They have not generally been attributed to a specific speaker as sometimes more than one speaker made a similar point. Those made by more than one speaker have been put together at the beginning**

- Milton Keynes is already a multicultural place, with a considerable international workforce and economy. Developing and disseminating the policy and strategy is an important way of demonstrating a positive approach to the Council's equalities agenda, celebrating Milton Keynes as a multicultural place. There are examples from other local authorities of council supported international links combating racism. There needs to be more emphasis made of this in the strategy, particularly of the involvement of people from other cultures in the implementation and monitoring of the policy
- the Council has to consider the implications of not developing the policy and strategy. Without it, the lack of coherence, the loss of potential contacts etc. would be detrimental
- partnership between the Council and the voluntary sector is very important and support that the Council can give to the voluntary sector in gaining access to European funding is crucial. The Council can provide information about funding, help find international partners and contribute to match finding. The voluntary sector can help to deliver Council objectives through their activities with this funding
- there is a huge untapped potential for developing greater information exchange especially through the Internet and this would strengthen the voluntary sector's ability to be effective locally. It could include exchanges about governance and equalities.
- a key challenge is how to disseminate the strategy across the community
- the churches in Milton Keynes already have a strong international interest with formal links across the world, a number of international church based groups based in the borough, and a local activity that reflects an interest in ethical issues globally
- Milton Keynes is part of the global village. Poverty anywhere affects prosperity everywhere so Milton Keynes Council must think globally to act locally. Supporting the Global Centre project is one way of doing this

- the churches and Interfaith Milton Keynes would like the ethical/spiritual dimension to be given higher priority in the strategy
- attracting companies and people to Milton Keynes is a crucial part of its continued success. The quality of life here is an important element in attracting people to the area. International companies, which form a high percentage of new investment, are attracted here because of this. 15% of employees work for international companies. Developing the European/international strategy is important because it demonstrates a commitment to those investors
- Ministers and MEPs have consistently encouraged local authorities to develop international links
- there are many examples of international links that have directly enhanced the ability of councils to deliver services to the local community more effectively
- there is funding available to support different kinds of links (know how fund, twinning etc.) and LGIB can support local authorities in developing links and in finding funding to do so

## **2. Comments from individuals attending meeting**

**Many of these comments were not direct comments about the policy and strategy but the issues raise questions about the role of the Council in responding to them**

- a local community group (linked to a church in Olney) have made links with a town in a developing country (Sierra Leone) and would like advice from the Council about ways of raising funds to help their linked town.
- a local secondary school has some excellent European links and facilities for teaching modern foreign languages and would like advice on how to maximise the use of facilities to support the business community
- a representative of a group involved in global issues would like to know how the Council or others can involve companies in the social and cultural life of the borough
- a local educational body would like to encourage a greater emphasis on the development of access to IT by the whole community so that international links can be developed through the use of email
- a woman from a developing country (Kenya) who had helped set up community based groups (including a women's self help group called Beyond the Kitchen), can see the direct links between community development here and in her country. She would like to encourage links for mutual benefit between communities
- a neighbourhood council representative would like contact between the Council and neighbourhood councils to work in partnership. He felt that they could support some of the community based links being called for by other speakers, to the benefit of both communities. The links between neighbourhood councils and inward investment bodies was also discussed

- a secondary school representative spoke of the importance of adopting the policy and strategy because it was a public way of supporting the role of schools in not only teaching other languages but encouraging children to understand the importance of international issues.
- another secondary school representative endorsed this approach and asked that the Council should encourage schools to include international issues in school Development Plans
- a voluntary sector representative said that the Council should support a range of different models of links to meet different interests. Friendship Links and time-limited links were discussed as possibilities.

### **3. Comments sent in after the meeting (3 respondents)**

- Ethical/spiritual and environmental issues should be high priorities for the Council.
- We should audit existing links (education/voluntary sector/churches)
- Does the “support” in the Strategy include financial support?
- The policy needs staffing to co-ordinate actions
- The paper needs to emphasise what Milton Keynes can offer others, not only list what the Council can benefit from.