

Minute of Meeting



General Purposes Committee

Date	Time	Venue
28 August 2018	11.00 am	Council Chamber, Midlothian House, Buccleuch Street, Dalkeith

Present:

Councillor Smaill (Chair)	Councillor Baird
Councillor Cassidy	Councillor Curran
Councillor Hackett	Councillor Imrie
Councillor Johnstone	Councillor Lay-Douglas
Councillor Milligan	Councillor Muirhead
Councillor McCall	Councillor Munro
Councillor Russell	Councillor Wallace
Councillor Winchester	

In attendance:

Alan Turpie	Legal Services Manager
Verona MacDonald	Democratic Services Team Leader
Inspector Ewan Smith	Police, Scotland

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillors Alexander, Hardie and Parry.

2. Order of Business

The Clerk advised that the order of business was as per the agenda circulated together with an additional item which the Chair had agreed to take on the basis

of a request by an applicant on the grounds of urgency to determine the application.

3. Declarations of interest

Councillor Curran indicated that he would be declaring an interest in the applications on the agenda relating to private hire car driver applications on the basis of his business interests in the taxi trade and also the street trader application because he knew one of the people listed within the paperwork circulated.

4. Minute of Meeting

The Minute of Meeting of 19 June 2018 was considered and approved. The Chair was thereafter authorised to sign the Minute as an accurate record of the meeting.

5. Public Reports

Report No.	Title	Presented by:
5.1	Twinning – Report by Director, Resources	Democratic Services Team Leader
Outline of report and summary of discussion		
<p>A report providing an update to the Committee with regard to the Council's relationship with its twinning partners was introduced by Verona MacDonald, Democratic Services Team Manager.</p>		
<p>The report noted that the former District Council had twinning arrangements in place with Kreis Heinsberg in Germany and Komarom-Esztergom in Hungary. In addition, some towns/villages in Midlothian were twinned with towns in France. In 2011 the Council agreed that whilst it appreciated the historical benefits of twinning and links in Europe, that in a financial climate of major cuts throughout the public sector, expenditure in the area of twinning had to be reduced. At that time, it was agreed to cancel the grant made annually to Midlothian Twinning Association and that all future hospitality arrangements including twinning and visits to all Council premises, civic hospitality, receptions and civic gifts, be approved by the Director, Resources in consultation with the Provost. In 2014, the Council agreed to fund, up to a maximum of £25,000, a Festival of Friendship which was held in Midlothian in October 2015. At that time concern was raised by some Elected Members that funding should not be provided due to the ongoing need to provide savings throughout the Council. Similar concerns in this regard had been expressed in 2011. After the Festival of Friendship hosted by Midlothian in 2015 where the full costs to the Council were considerably higher than the figure approved, it was felt that the value of such events taking into account the considerable financial and other resources costs incurred by the Council, could not be justified.</p>		
<p>In recent times, twinning events have been limited to visits by school children in France to Dalkeith organised and operated by a member of staff at Dalkeith High School and visits by small groups of people from the two districts. Midlothian Twinning Association has continued to be involved in some of these events and the Council, in accordance with the decision made on 24 May 2011, has hosted visits to Midlothian House primarily from groups from Germany and France. These visits have been facilitated by Dalkeith High School or Midlothian Twinning Association with the Provost hosting a small reception in the Council</p>		

Chamber to formally welcome the groups to the district. In September 2017, 2017, following internal discussion, the 2 twinning partners of Midlothian were informed that the former twinning arrangements involving upwards of £30,000 per visit of specific expense associated to Twinning Festivals could not be repeated and would require to cease. This decision was taken as a result of the severe financial position the Council is facing and with the knowledge that the two twinning partners had an expectation that the Council would continue to be involved including financing the Festivals and other related events. Notification of the Council's decision was relayed to the 2 twinning partners in advance of a meeting whereby future festivals would be discussed with decisions made with regard to their future and content. In this format the Council had experienced Twinning Festival exchanges in which extensive hospitality, travel and accommodation fell to the Council to pay. The events concerned were facilitated by Midlothian Twinning Association but fell under loose agreements between the respective Councils to fund. Historically such exchanges were on the basis of home hosting.

Thereafter, questions were put to and subsequently answered by the Provost and Councillor Russell in her role as Depute Provost.

Councillor Winchester, seconded by Councillor Hackett moved approval of the recommendations contained in the report. On a vote being taken by a show of hands, 13 votes were cast for the motion and one against.

Decision

The Committee agreed to:-

- (a) continue with a twinning concept but on a different basis in which parties visiting Midlothian would enjoy the same basic hospitality as afforded to groups in general visiting the Council. Typically this extends to a light sandwich lunch or tea /coffee reception as part of the official welcome from the Provost and Deputy Provost and approved in advance by the Director, Resources;
- (b) wholly move away from touristic exchanges to more specific areas in which an additional activity benefit above fraternisation occurs. These would be in the areas of:- music, sport and cultural exchange and;
- (c) continue to support twinning on the basis outlined in the report thus creating a model in which it acts as a catalyst for cross-border purposive exchanges and continues the tradition in Midlothian of welcoming partners from the twinning areas

Action

Director, Resources

Exclusion of Members of the Public

In view of the nature of the business to be transacted, the Committee agreed that the public be excluded from the meeting during discussion of the undernoted item, as contained in the Addendum hereto, as there might be disclosed exempt information as defined in paragraphs 3, 6 and 14 of Part I of Schedule 7A to the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973:-

- 6.1 Application for a Private Hire Car Driver's Licence – S. Banks
- 6.2 Application for a Private Hire Car Driver's Licence – A. Kierzkowshi
- 6.3 Application for a Private Hire Car Driver's Licence (renewal) – R. Lambert
- 6.4 Application for a Private Hire Car Driver's Licence (renewal) – M. Ritchie
- 6.5 Application for a Private Hire Car Driver's Licence (renewal) – S. Watson
- 6.6 Application for a Street Trader's Licence – L. Thomson
- 6.7 Additional Item – Application for a Private Hire Car Driver's Licence -

The Meeting terminated at 12.55 pm