

REPORT TO: Executive Board
DATE: 7 June 2007
REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Corporate & Policy
SUBJECT: Application for Twinning Grant
WARD(S): Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to give details of 1 application being made to the Twinning Grant Fund.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the following grant be awarded to:

(a) £3,000 to the Fairfield High School

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 In April 1996, Halton Borough Council set up a Grant Fund to assist in enabling all members of the community to access and gain benefit from the Council's International Links.

3.2 Since 1996, a number of groups have accessed the fund to undertake exchange visits to Marzahn-Hellersdorf in Germany; Leiria in Portugal; Usti-nad-Labem in the Czech Republic; and Tongling City in China, including the Halton Swimming Team; Halton Youth Service; PHAB; St. Chad's School, and Fairfield High School who have hosted teachers and pupils from Tongling previously. These links have resulted in a number of reciprocal visits from each town.

3.3 Participants in previous exchanges have found that the benefits of learning about another culture and language are immense. A wide range of activity in the Borough has been facilitated by the provision of grant aid and has given an opportunity to those who would not otherwise be able to participate.

3.4 The application received from the Fairfield High School, requests support for a visit of 10 GCES art students and 2 adults to visit No. 1 High School in Tongling.

3.5 The student's coursework has been inspired by work donated to the school by Tongling pupils during their visit to Fairfield High School in May 2006.

3.6 During the visit by the Tongling pupils they visited local art galleries and enjoyed the British art. In Tongling the Fairfield pupils will showcase

their artwork and see the artwork produced by the Chinese pupils since the visit in May 2006. The pupils will enjoy a full experience of Chinese culture.

3.6 The school have very strong links with the No. 1 school with the pupils from the school having pen pals in No 1 High School. It is hoped that this will become an annual event.

3.7 The applicant has identified total costs of £15,210. This is broken down into travel costs of £9,600; accommodation costs of £5,500; insurance £60 and other costs such as art materials etc £50.

3.7 The school has been fundraising for the visit and raised £2000 so far. They have received £500 in donations from local companies and a grant from the British Council of £5,000.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The application is in line with the borough's European Strategy, in particular the promotion of international links, which seeks to offer the opportunity to participate to the whole population of Halton.

4.2 The application will also make a major contribution to the Local Strategic Partnership Key Priorities Children and Young People and Healthy Halton.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 In reaching a decision concerning the level of grant to be awarded, Members are requested to note that the twinning grant budget is frequently oversubscribed. Also, in preparation for a reduction in European funding after 2006, the Council is also placing emphasis on developing economic (transnational), as well as cultural and social twinning links, and as a result, there will be added pressure on the budget in this financial year.

5.2 Members are also advised that the guidance given to applicants is that any grant awarded will not usually exceed £3,000. Grants normally support up to a maximum 75% of the total costs of the project.

5.3 In regard to Fairfield School, the applicant has applied for twinning grant 3 times; £3,000 in June 1997 for a visit from a choir from Usti nad Labem; £3,000 in October 2004 for a visit to Tongling No 1 High School; £1,310.96 in May 2006 for a visit from Tongling No 1 High School.

5.5 Within this framework, Members may feel that a contribution of £3000 would be a reasonable contribution from the twinning grant fund towards the total costs of the visit,

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 6.1 Measures are in place to minimise risks to the delivery of the project. For example, the as part of the terms and conditions of grant applicants are required to complete a risk assessment proforma.

7.0 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 7.1 The project focuses on promoting social inclusion for young people in the Kingsway, Riverside, Halton View and wards in Halton; encouraging co-operation between young people in Halton and Tongling and addressing prejudice and promoting understanding.

8.0 REASONS FOR DECISION

- 8.1 The applicant has strong links with No 1 Middle school in Tongling, which have resulted in one visit from Tongling and hopefully many reciprocal visits in the future.

9.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 9.1 The option to reduce the grant was considered. However, the applicant is offering reasonable value for money and has identified match funding to support the application.

10.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE

- 10.1 September 2007.

11.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

- 11.1 There are no background documents under the meaning of this Act.