
REPORT 6
(1215/52/IM)

REPORT BACK - NEW ZEALAND SISTER CITIES CONFERENCE, DUNEDIN 15 AND 16 APRIL 2010

1. Purpose of Report

To report back to all Councillors on the Conference including the subjects covered and an opinion of the value of attendance by Elected Members.

2. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 1. Receive the information.*

3. Details on the Conference

The New Zealand Sister Cities Conference was held at the Otago Museum in Dunedin from 15th – 16th of April 2010.

The theme of the conference was 'Sister Cities – The Reality'. The conference speakers were asked to focus on the following topics: relationships, education, arts and culture, links, initiatives, trade and youth.

Due to advice of the Sister Cities New Zealand Conference being received too late to be included in the Forward Programme for the Strategy and Policy Committee, an email was circulated to Councillors to seek expressions of interest.

The Council at its meeting of 28th June 2004, gave the Mayor, the Chair of the appropriate standing committee and the Chief Executive delegated authority to approve the attendance of elected members at conferences and seminars where there is insufficient time to refer the matter to Council (or committee) for consideration.

Councillor Hayley Wain was approved to attend the conference through the process outlined above. Tom Yuan, Manager of International Relations at Wellington City Council also attended the conference.

4. Subjects Covered

There were a number of key speakers that addressed the conference on a variety of topics, with the second morning of the conference being dedicated to youth speakers.

Hon Rodney Hide – Minister of Local Government

Rodney Hide spoke about the importance of developing people to people relationships which will flow on to city to city relationships, leading to advantages in a number of areas including trade, tourism, culture, research and technology.

Mr Hide was questioned about how he saw sister cities looking ahead, he emphasized the pressures facing ratepayers however he did acknowledge that practical relationships are important. Mr Hide does not consider sister cities to be a part of 'core council services' however he did endorse Councils ability to spend money on international relationships (including sister cities).

Shimrath Paul – CEO Otago Museum

Mr Paul was appointed as CEO of the Otago Museum in 1995, he has been proactive in developing strong relationships with Dunedin's sister cities Otaru and Shanghai. Mr Paul spoke of the importance of the relationships between the sister cities and their museums and how this has led to international exhibitions being staged in Dunedin, which would have ordinarily been beyond Otago Museums budget.

Mr Paul also stated that culture goes beyond ethnicity and religion and is often a starting point in expressing our identity. With the sister city relationships it has enabled people in Otago, Shanghai and Otaru to be exposed to other cultures.

Toshihiro Takahashi – Japanese Ambassador

Mr Takahashi has been the Japanese Ambassador to New Zealand since 2007. Mr Takahashi has been involved in many sister city related activities between New Zealand and Japan including the Japan Festival of Wellington 2009. Mr Takahashi spoke about the history of sister city relationships between New Zealand and Japan, with Christchurch being the first New Zealand city to establish a formal relationship in 1972. He spoke of the importance of economic exchanges although he stressed that they can be difficult to develop. His key message was about ensuring that we continue to work together and share information.

Kenji Ikeda – Director of the Japan Local Government Centre (CLAIR)

Mr Ikeda spoke about the number of sister city relationships between New Zealand and Japan and values that are common to both countries. Mr Ikeda stressed the importance of involving youth in international relations early on through sports and cultural exchanges and ensuring that we capitalize on the technology available. Economic and business exchanges are key, although he recognised that it can be difficult with limited and competing needs for funding

by local government. Mr Ikeda spoke briefly about the development of the Timaru shop in Eniwa, Japan.

He traversed the question about what sister cities can achieve. He believes we can pursue economic benefit, ensure there is dialogue between local government on common issues and empower community groups.

Malcom Wong – Chairman of Dunedin Chinese Gardens Trust

Mr Wong provided the conference with an overview of the development of the Dunedin Chinese garden. The garden is one of only three authentic Chinese gardens outside China. The project took 11 years from planning to completion. The Dunedin City Council committed \$1 million as did the Community Trust and the Government committed \$3.75 million. Shanghai provided some of the materials as well as Chinese labourers who used traditional methods to construct the garden. Delegates were taken for a tour of the garden after Mr Wong's presentation.

Steve Bayliss – Former General Manager Marketing, Air New Zealand

Mr Bayliss spoke about how Air New Zealand has reinvented itself as an airline that New Zealanders can be proud of. This involved disposing of the traditional marketing strategies and manuals and developing a people based approach. Ensuring that employees enjoyed their job, which would come through in employees interactions with Air New Zealand customers.

Air New Zealand has developed innovative and creative campaigns using social media e.g. the nothing to hide campaign which was hugely successful in raising Air New Zealand's profile across the world. Air New Zealand continues to develop successful campaigns through social media as it is aware of how technology has lead to a power shift and the potential exposure through social media. Mr Bayliss stated that Air New Zealand success is linked to the success of their relationships and ensuring quality and meaningful interactions.

Workshop One – Youth Building Global Connections

This workshop was run by the Ministry of Youth Development, the focus of this workshop was how youth could be involved in Sister Cities and what support could be provided. I was asked to provide an update on the outcomes of a youth workshop held in Wellington in March 2010.

A number of ideas were discussed such as establishing an exchange alumni, developing a youth website that would bring together international opportunities, improve awareness of sponsorship opportunities, provide mentoring for those young people who go on exchanges and capitalising on technology such as video conferencing.

The outcomes of the initial workshop held in Wellington and the conference will be discussed and developed by the Wellington Sister Cities Youth Steering Group.

Belinda Williams – Sister Cities Youth Delegate Australia

Belinda originates from the small town of Tamworth but is currently studying in Sydney. Belinda informed the conference about Australia's sister cities youth programme which is held annually and runs alongside the Australia Sister Cities Conference. On average there are usually between 30-60 delegates aged between 16-23 years of age. The aim of the conference is to inform and involve youth in Sister Cities.

One of the important features of the youth conference is that it is run and organised by young people. On the last day of the conferences both the adult and youth delegates get together to share their ideas and experiences and look at ways they can continue to work together for the benefit of Sister City relationships in Australia.

Other Youth Speakers

There were a range of other youth speakers that spoke on a variety of topics including Anita Perkins from the Asia Young Leaders Network who spoke about the purpose and role of the Asia Young Leaders Network. Divya Dhar who was recently named young New Zealander of the year and Corwin Newall who is studying Japanese at Otago University and has been involved in exchanges with Japan.

Angela Wallace – Executive Officer Export New Zealand Bay of Plenty

Angela Wallace spoke about developing an economic relationship with Tauranga's sister city Hitachi. Tauranga City Council contracts out the economic side of their sister city relationship to Export Bay of Plenty. Export Bay of Plenty worked alongside the local Chamber of Commerce to identify 15 companies that were looking at selling their products in the Japanese market. Export Bay of Plenty worked with the companies to develop leaflets for the Japanese market. All 15 companies paid \$180 plus providing samples for Export Bay of Plenty to take their products to the Hitachi Industrial Fair. In return for the \$180 each company received a full written report about the potential for their product in the Japanese market. This enabled the companies to gain realistic feedback, with no agent's fee.

Annual General Meeting

Sister Cities New Zealand's Annual General Meeting was held on the 15th April. Eight people were nominated, including myself. There were four vacancies on the Board. At the AGM Peter Tennent, Mayor of New Plymouth stood down as Chair of the New Zealand Sister Cities Board; Bill Woods's former vice president of Sister Cities New Zealand was elected as the new president.

Members who were elected or re-elected at the AGM were Hiromi Morris (Wellington), Graeme Barsanti (Marlborough), Roger Matthews (North Shore) and Hayley Wain (Wellington).

5. Benefit to Council/Elected Members

The New Zealand Sister Cities Conference was worthwhile attending. The speakers were interesting and diverse. The conference confirmed the need for developing innovative ways of enhancing connections with our Sister Cities and ensuring that Sister Cities remains relevant for future generations.

I found it of particular interest to find out what other local authorities are doing in this area and I believe that we can leverage of the success of Export Bay of Plenty to further develop economic relations between our Sister Cities. I would recommend this conference in the future.

Report prepared by: *Councillor Hayley Wain*