

INVITATIONS FOR COUNCILLORS TO VISIT JAPAN – 17-24 OCTOBER 2009

1. Purpose of Report

To advise Council that separate invitations have been received by Councillors Hayley Wain and Rob Goulden to travel to Japan with members of the Hutt Minoh Friendship House Trust (HMFHT) and the Wellington Sakai Association (WSA) from 17-24 October 2009 and to consider requests for assistance to help fund the visits by Councillors Wain and Goulden.

2. Recommendations

Officers recommend that Council:

- 1. Receive the information.*

3. Background

This year is the 15th anniversary of the forming of the Wellington-Sakai sister cities relationship and members of the Wellington Sakai Association (WSA) are planning a trip to Sakai to mark the occasion. The Association has promoted the trip amongst its members and to people who have been involved in the relationship in the past, such as Councillor Rob Goulden and the members of the Hutt Minoh Friendship House Trust (HMFHT), of which Councillor Wain is a Council appointed trustee. The trip is being organised by Jim Barnes, the President of WSA.

The arrangements are for the group to travel together to Japan on 17 October 2009, stay in Sakai for four days and then the HMFHT people would travel on to Minoh for an additional four days.

A total of 11 people from WSA and the HMFHT have confirmed that they will be going, including the ex-Mayor of Hutt City. These numbers do not include Councillors Wain or Goulden. The visit is a private visit and other members of the group are funding their own travel costs.

4. Discussion

4.1 *Background to invitations received*

(i) Councillor Wain

The HMFHT is chaired by David Ogden, the Mayor of Hutt City and Councillor Wain is the Wellington City Council's member on the Trust (re-appointed as its Trustee by the Council on 6 November 2007, having also been a Trustee during the 2004/2007 triennium).

The Mayor has received an invitation from Mayor Ogden, for Councillor Hayley Wain to visit Japan as a member of the group and to visit the cities of both Sakai and Minoh.

Mayor Ogden has advised that Councillor Wain is the only trustee who has not been to Japan and that a visit would be helpful to her and to the Trust. He has confirmed that she attends meetings as required and has been a good representative of Wellington City.

Officers have been advised that the Trust regularly funds, in part, trips by a wide range of people and Mayor Ogden has indicated he is prepared to recommend that the Trust fund a trip by Councillor Wain to the extent of approximately \$1500. He has asked for the Council's support, both moral and financial, to enable Councillor Wain to visit Japan with the group.

Councillor Wain has indicated her interest in going.

(ii) Councillor Goulden

Councillor Goulden has been invited to join the trip because of his close involvement with the Association and in particular his help in hosting members of visiting schoolboy rugby teams from Sakai. The President of WSA acknowledges that the Mayor has recently visited Sakai. However, because it is the 15th anniversary of the relationship the Association feel it would help if Councillor Goulden joined the group. Their concern is that representatives from Wellington may "lose face" if no one from Wellington City Council visits with the group. To quote Mr Barnes "It will give the trip a push – it is almost like having the Trade Minister in the team of business leaders on a trade delegation overseas".

Councillor Goulden has indicated that he would like to join the trip and has asked for the request to be considered by the Council.

4.2 *Benefits to be gained*

While there may be some benefits to be gained by using the visit to further cement Wellington-Sakai relations, there is no strong justification for the Council supporting either of these requests on the grounds of external relations.

The Mayor recently (in May 2009) made an official visit to Sakai to commemorate the 15th anniversary of the sister city relationship and during that visit had formal meetings with the Sakai Mayor, the Sakai Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Tourism Department and the Education Bureau of the Sakai Municipal government.

There is some merit in supporting Councillor Wain's trip because it is responding to the Trust's invitation and supporting Councillor Wain's role as the Wellington City Council's representative on the Trust.

Although no "official" functions are being planned, officers have discussed the visit with Mr Shibuya, the International Manager of the Sakai Government and he has confirmed that arrangements could be made for Councillors Wain and Goulden to meet with the Sakai Mayor and to attend the Sakai Festival in October.

4.3 Costs involved

The group will be travelling economy class at a negotiated airfare of \$2052 per person, inclusive of GST. As part of the negotiated rate, all members must depart for Japan as a group on 17 October 2009 but are not required to return to New Zealand together. With the HMFHT agreeing to meet \$1,500 of Councillor Wain's costs, the total airfare costs involved would be \$3,158 (\$552 for Councillor Wain and \$2,052 for Councillor Goulden).

It has been confirmed that the Sakai Wellington Association (Japan) will pay for homestay and meals for either or both Councillors while they are in Sakai and that it is likely that homestay accommodation would also be available in Minoh for Councillor Wain.

Based on the Council's Travel and Accommodation Standard, an incidentals allowance of approximately \$26 per day would be payable to both Councillors; being a total of approximately \$208 each for eight days travel.

It is understood that some meal costs would be incurred (assuming accommodation and most meal costs are met by the hosts). On this basis the cost per person is estimated at approximately \$500. This would include the cost of taking the host family out for a meal.

It is likely that Sakai will be able to arrange another four days homestay for Councillor Goulden if he is not going to Minoh with the HMFHT members.

However, if Councillor Goulden goes to Minoh for four days with the other members of the group it is likely that extra costs of \$1,014 (accommodation \$576, meals \$414 and transportation of \$24) would be incurred.

The costs involved for both Councillors Wain and Goulden to visit Japan from 17-24 October 2009 would therefore be in the vicinity of \$5,034 (\$1260 for Councillor Wain and \$3,774 for Councillor Goulden assuming the additional costs of travelling to Minoh are incurred).

4.4 Funding for the visit

Other than the external relations budget there is no specific budget for travel for Councillors of this nature. However, for reasons discussed above, the use of this budget is not supported.

The only other budget from which funding could be met is the elected members' conference budget (GVEM01).

This budget has a sum of \$26,500 set aside for the costs of travel and accommodation (excluding conference fees) for Councillors when attending conferences and seminars during the 2009/2010 financial year. A total of \$4,462 of that budget has already been allocated for Councillors attendance at the Local Government New Zealand Conference in Christchurch (26-29 July 2009) and the TRAFINZ Conference in Auckland (7-10 September 2009) leaving a balance of \$22,038.

Although the costs (and dates in some cases) are not known at this stage other annual conferences scheduled for the 2009/10 financial year that elected members may wish to attend are set out in the following schedule. Last years travel and accommodation costs for these conferences are also shown to give an indication of the costs that are likely to be incurred during the 2009/2010 financial year.

Conference	Dates (where known)	Cost for last years conference (excluding registration fees)
NZ Recreation Association	2-4 November 2009	\$1,046
RMLA Conference	1 October 2009	Nil
Cycling Conference	12-13 November 2009	Nil
Sister Cities Conference	Not known	\$748
NZ Walking Conference	Not known	\$742
Wasteminz Conference	Not known	Nil (held in Wellington)

The cost of Councillors Wain and Goulden going on this visit to Japan would be \$5,034 and the impact on the budget would be as follows:

	2009/2010 Budget (excluding registration fees)	Year to Date Expenditure	Unexpended Funds
Total budget for accommodation and travel	\$26,500	\$4,462	\$22,038
Impact if Council meets the cost of Councillors Wain and Goulden visit to Japan	Cr Wain \$1,260 Cr Goulden <u>\$3,774*</u> Total <u>\$5,034*</u>	\$9,496	\$17,004

*Includes the likely costs if Councillors Goulden goes to Minoh for four days.

Other meetings that are scheduled to be held during the period concerned are as follows:

20 October 2009	Pre SPC meeting session
21 October 2009	LGNZ KnowHow Financial Governance Course
22 October 2009	Strategy and Policy Committee
23 October 2009	Council Controlled Organisation Performance Subcommittee

5. Conclusion

Council is asked to give consideration to these invitations so that the Hutt Minoh Friendship House Trust and the Wellington Sakai Association can be advised of the decision and any necessary arrangements put in hand.

Contact Officer: *Ross Bly, Electoral Officer.*