

GUILDFORD–FREIBURG ASSOCIATION
(now called **GUILDFORD TWINNING ASSOCIATION: see item 6 below**)

MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Thursday 24 May 2018 in the Guildford Borough Council Chamber, Millmead House

Present: Mayor Mike Parsons, Chair Barbara Ford, Treasurer Michael Gorman, Hon. Secretary Hilary Perry and approximately 25 other members.

Chair's Introduction: The Chair, Barbara Ford, welcomed all members to the meeting before the official business of the meeting commenced.

- 1. Appointment of Mayor as President:** Barbara Ford welcomed the Mayor of Guildford, Mike Parsons, and confirmed that in accordance with the Constitution he was appointed as our President for the year. The Mayor would also be taking the chair for the meeting as is traditional for us.
- 2. Apologies for absence:**
Apologies were received from Andrew and Julia Aylott, Hilde Bartlett, John & Metta Baylis, Gordon Bridger, Andrea & Günter Dombrowe, Ute Fowler, Tessa Johnson, Jennifer Jordan, Peter & Pamela Levell, Jennifer Margrave, Tricia McIntosh, Ian & Ann Stewart, Tony Trent, Camilla & Alan Winn and Joan Wrenn.
- 3. Minutes of last Annual General Meeting 18 May 2017.** These were circulated at the meeting. No points were raised so the minutes were accepted as read.
- 4. Chair's report.**
Barbara Ford outlined the highlights of the past year in her report - see APPENDIX – and formally launched the first of what is to be an annual Essay Competition for Guildford sixth-formers:
- 5. Treasurer's & Membership Secretary's report.**
Michael Gorman, Treasurer and Membership Secretary, first reported a very successful year for membership under the new Chair, with growth of just over 9% to over 160 members. He also mentioned that approx 100 of the 108 households are on e-mail, which is very helpful in sending out communications.

He noted the sad loss of member Mrs Mary Lloyd-Jones, a former mayor of Guildford and former chair of the Association, who died in December 2017.

Copies of the audited accounts for the financial year ending 31 March 2018 were distributed by Michael. He then presented his Treasurer's Report, the audited figures having been signed off by David Barr, our honorary examiner:

- Assets at 31 March 2018 £5,011; assets at 31 March 2017 £5,285; deficit (i.e. payments minus receipts) 2017/18 £274
- Mike stated that the important figure is the net assets of £5,011. Despite the small reduction since last year, we are still in an extremely healthy position and well able to undertake the Chair's plans.
- The auditor/examiner, David Barr has now indicated he would like to stand down after 11 years. Michael advised an auditor needs to have a financial background and that a computer link is essential.
- One innovation last year was the introduction of a PayPal account. This has been very successful, the majority of payments for the recent German dinner came through PayPal. As a security measure, since the PayPal account is operated by one person only, unlike our bank account where we require two signatures (which protects both the Association and the volunteers) Michael does not leave money in the PayPal account for long but transfers it to the Association's bank account.

- Barbara pointed out that volunteers' travelling expenses for the Freiburg Partner Cities Fair are only paid to the two people manning the stalls, anyone going for pleasure has to pay their own expenses.

After his report, the Treasurer answered questions, including:

Q: Why did the heading Social Functions show a gain in 2017 but a loss in 2018?

A: We provided free food and drink at several events last year, including £138 at the AGM. A gift for the retiring chairman was also included under Social Functions, as was the fee paid to the musician who attended the Partner Cities Fair on our behalf – in 2016-17 there was no Fair.

Michael Gorman thanked all those present.

6. Motion (that the name and objects of the Association be amended as set out in the AGM notice):

The Mayor asked the Chair to move the motion. Barbara started by saying that while a complete overhaul of the Constitution would be desirable and would be proposed for next year, the current proposal was limited to the amendment of the objects so as to include support for any other twinning which Guildford might enter into, and the consequential change of name. This expansion of the Association's sphere would only extend to formal twinning arrangements, and therefore would not extend to Guildford's relationship with Mkono and Dongying which are characterised as a link and a cooperation respectively. Furthermore, the support would be given according to the proposed wording "to the extent practicable" – thus if it is not practicable, the Association will not give it.

The proposal was prompted by Guildford Borough Council's negotiations with Versailles, which may well lead to a formal twinning. The Council was supportive of the change and if the Versailles twinning went ahead, would increase its grant to an amount not yet finalised, and extend its practical support eg in the area of publicity and use of the Council chamber for events. The anticipated advantages to the Association would be: increased local interest in twinning, with an increase in members and Committee members; the expansion of possible activities; wider appeal to the young, as French is more widely taught than German; an exciting new venture; and avoidance of the competition which would be inevitable if a separate association were formed to support a Versailles or other twinning.

After her summary, Barbara answered questions.

Q: Freiburg has 12 partner cities, if Guildford were to acquire as many how would we cope?

A: The problem seems very unlikely to arise in our lifetime, given the protracted nature of the negotiations with Versailles, but "to the extent practicable" would apply.

The Mayor said he believed the Council has no other plans.

Q: What happened to the previous twinning with Bar-le-Duc?

A: Both sides seem to have lost interest in the twinning after it was signed. The current Guildford Council wrote recently to Bar-leDuc to ask if they wished to revive it: Bar-le-Duc declined.

Q: Who started the conversation with Versailles?

A: Versailles started it. They were seeking a UK twin, contacted the British Embassy in Paris who in turn contacted the Foreign Office, who suggested Guildford.

Q: Freiburg is able to sustain so many twinings because their city council has a whole department devoted to international relations, so any expansion for us has implications for the size of the Committee and also cost implications, which are quite large.

A: If Guildford Borough Council does not put backing and money into it then the Versailles twinning will not work. We need to assume they will, but our own commitment would be "to the extent practicable".

Barbara confirmed that the Deputy Leader of the Council, Matt Furniss, would speak after the meeting.

There was some discussion about the new name and about the possible structure eg one expanded committee dealing with both towns, or two sub-committees with a town allocated to each. Barbara had discussed possible structures with other twinning associations in the region, all of whom have slightly different structures. She suggested we try one version for a while and see how it works for us, changing it later if necessary, rather than commit ourselves in advance to a particular arrangement.

The motion was passed unanimously.

7. Elections

a) **Election of officers:** The following officers were unanimously elected:

Chair:	Barbara Ford
Vice-Chair:	Peter Slade
Hon. Treasurer/Membership Sec:	Michael Gorman
Hon. Secretary:	Hilary Perry

c) **Election of Committee:**

The following members of the committee were all elected or re-elected en bloc:

Irene Black
Ros Calow
Steve Callaghan
Patricia Grayburn
Jennifer Margrave

Councillors David Goodwin and Mike Piper are committee members nominated by Guildford Borough Council.

8. Retirements

David Barr, the 2017/2018 Auditor/Examiner, has asked for his name not to be put forward for another year. He was thanked for his contribution over many years.

Barbara Ford advised that Wolfgang Pietrek had indicated that he wished to retire at this meeting. The Mayor proposed a vote of thanks for Wolfgang's valuable contribution in the past.

The meeting was formally closed at 8.15 pm.

APPENDIX

CHAIR'S REPORT AGM 2018

This was my first year as Chair of the Association, a steep learning curve and an exciting and busy time for me personally, as I have got to know more and more people, their interests and their concerns - Association members, officers of the councils of Guildford and Freiburg, and people whose interest in twinning and our lovely twin town we are trying to encourage.

It's also been busy for the Association. Our aim has been to refresh and update, with a focus on the future - i.e. the young - but without losing sight of the interests of all age groups. And of course

our aims remain to attract more members to support and participate in our activities and to interest and involve more people in the aims of twinning: international friendship and co-operation.

Twinning activities and events this past year have included:

- Our participation in Freiburg's biennial Partner Cities Fair in June, combined with a visit by members, of whom I was one this time. As usual, the Association ran the Guildford stall in the Fair, which, as Freiburg has 12 partner cities now, was a really international occasion. As ever, Freiburg City Council was very hospitable and supportive and the whole event was delightful, in spite of the blistering heat.
- Various items fall into the category of our focus on youth. The first was last July when, at the invitation of Holy Trinity Pewley Down junior school, I talked about twinning and Freiburg to 96 Year 3 children (aged 7-8). A wonderful audience, attentive and interested.
- Then, school exchanges. In the past year a new group from the Goethe Gymnasium visited George Abbot School, but that's all. So I've been working hard with recently-recruited Committee member Steve Callaghan, to encourage many more school exchanges by developing a special twinning programme to support them with some fresh ideas. We've just had a meeting with delegates from a number of Guildford schools to discuss their requirements and see how we can satisfy them, and in June Steve and I are going to Freiburg to do the same with delegates from a group on Freiburg schools. We've been given practical support for this endeavour by both Guildford and Freiburg councils. We hope this work will bear fruit over the coming year and that there will be a lot more action to report at the AGM 2019. And this programme will be useful if Guildford should twin with another town.....
- As a separate item in our youth programme, Steve has prepared – and I now formally launch – an annual Essay Competition for Guildford sixth-formers: the subject this year is ““Green” (environmental) lessons from and for Guildford and Freiburg”. This is a meaty and important topic and we hope will stimulate some interesting entries - and also of course that it will stimulate young people's interest in twinning and our twin town, raise the Association's profile and stimulate interest in us generally. We are offering two cash prizes and Freiburg council has donated two books. Full details are on our website. Please encourage young people you know to take part.
- As to sport, a boys' football team from Freiburg visited Guildford and played against Guildford City Boys & Girls FC, raising our hopes that the annual exchanges might revive. Next year we will be looking at ways to help increase sporting exchanges.
- Our annual public lecture having developed recently into two annual public lectures, this year we really pulled the stops out: fascinating and informative lectures by distinguished academics on two aspects of German life - last Autumn, Dr Emanuele Massetti on their political and constitutional system, then in Spring this year, Professor Erik Levi on German music. You can find a summary of these talks in our newsletter, and the presenters' slides on our website.
- We, particularly Committee member Ros Galow, have worked to encourage more arts links. Ros arranged a link between Freiburg artist Tamuna Gejadze and local artist Angela Watson, selling cards made by each at the Christmas market, and then in spite of practical difficulties managed to set up a return visit to Guildford of Freiburg artist Telemach Wiesinger, this time presenting his short films. That's next Wednesday 30th May at 7.30 in the Guildhall – do come!
- Our annual members' social events were both very successful: the Summer lunch party with drinks on the lawn in the sunshine, followed by a buffet lunch, and the Winter dinner party too, in spite of the worst weather in Britain for years which reduced the numbers able to attend.

- Our annual mini German Christmas market went very well: it was busy and buzzy, raising both our profile and a good sum for our activities.

The refreshing and modernizing process has included some changes on a practical level:

- we've modernised our website, with the help of Tony my husband, our webmaster, adding a PayPal facility to take online payments, an indispensable tool nowadays,
- we've anticipated GDPR and written a brand-new hot-off-the-press data privacy policy which has just been posted on the website,
- we communicate almost entirely by email rather than post – which saves money and time
- we've upgraded our publicity
- and symbolically I have taken the modern, gender-neutral, title "Chair".

Now I want to thank all the people who have contributed to this work and its success: of course the Association's Committee members, plus their supportive spouses – I especially thank my husband Tony; the Councils of both Guildford and Freiburg - but special thanks to Diana Roberts, Guildford Borough Council's Marketing and Development Manager, who on top of her regular work has been unflaggingly helpful to us in our modernisation and upgrading of the public face we present to the world.

Finally – the bad news and a plea: we have lost several Committee members this year, and two more have indicated they want to stand down as soon as replacements can be found. So if you, or anyone you know, would like to join the Committee as Treasurer, Secretary, Social Secretary or in any other capacity, please contact me!

Notes prepared by Hilary Perry