

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Executive Director of Corporate Services

Corporate Cultural Sub-Committee: 18 August 2009

Subject: Possible friendship link with Beauvoisin

1. Purpose

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to advise on developments relating to the possible link with Beauvoisin.

2. Background

- 2.1** The Committee, on 10 March 2009, agreed that officers should explore three options to link West Dunbartonshire and Beauvoisin as follows:-
- a)** linking Beauvoisin with a similar community
 - b)** forming school to school links only; and
 - c)** forming a friendship link
- 2.2** An official delegation from Beauvoisin made an exploratory visit to West Dunbartonshire in May. The delegation comprised Mayor Bernard Chassang and his wife; Deputy Mayor Manuel Gabarri, winegrower Frédéric Rouvin, Regional Councillor Robert Crauste and community organiser Julian Dunning.
- 2.3** The visit was particularly successful. The delegation met representatives from local groups and organisations as well as visiting the West Dunbartonshire area and attending the Scottish Pipe Band Championship.
- 2.4** Since their return, Julian Dunning has suggested that a small official delegation from West Dunbartonshire make a reciprocal visit in late September or October this year for a series of meetings to rubber stamp the link and investigate options for contacts.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1** Beauvoisin is a small town of 3,317 inhabitants, compared to West Dunbartonshire's 91,240. It is not normal practice to link two communities with such a large disparity in population. However, the inclusion of Councillor Robert Crauste in the delegation has brought the possibility of extending the contact within the Region of Languedoc Roussillon. Languedoc-Roussillon is made up of 5 départements and has a population of 2,548,000.
- 3.2** Georges Frêche, President of Languedoc Roussillon Regional Council, has indicated that he wishes to meet a delegation from the Council as part of any visit to Beauvoisin. Contact with the wider area would increase the possibility of achieving benefits for West Dunbartonshire in terms of economy and tourism.
- 3.3** Beauvoisin now seeks to formalise the link and to explore in more depth the contacts to be made. The possibility of connecting in some way with

Languedoc Roussillon is a new and unexpected development which will require further investigation.

4. Personnel Issues

- 4.1** There are no personnel issues arising from this report.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1** Funding for a visit could be met from within the existing twinning budget. The financial implications of any formal connection between the two areas would depend on the individual links created between schools or local organisations.

6. Risk Analysis

- 6.1** There are logistical difficulties of linking two areas which are disproportionate in population. Beauvoisin is much smaller than West Dunbartonshire, while Languedoc Roussillon is much larger. It may not be possible for the council to meet the expectations for contacts and links.
- 6.2** There are, however, opportunities to publicise this area to a whole French region which could bring benefits.

7. Conclusions and Officers' Recommendations

- 7.1** It is recommended that further consideration be given to linking West Dunbartonshire with Beauvoisin and the Region of Languedoc Roussillon.
- 7.2** Members are asked to consider whether a small delegation from the Council should go to Beauvoisin on an exploratory visit which would include a meeting with the Mayor of Languedoc Roussillon. If so, the composition of the delegation should be agreed.
- 7.3** Any delegation should report back to the committee on the best form of link in the circumstances and on options for developing it for community, tourism and economic benefit.

Joyce White, Executive Director of Corporate Services

Background Papers Report by the Executive Director of Corporate Services to the meeting of the Corporate and Efficient Governance Committee on 10 March 2009 and minute thereof.

Wards Affected: All wards

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