

**NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM'S REPORT TO CABINET**

1.    **HEADING**                                 **Newcastles of the World Alliance**
- Submitted by:**                         **Joanne Halliday**
- Portfolio:**                               **Economic Development, Town Centres, Business and Customer Service**
- Ward(s) affected:**                     **All**

**Purpose of the Report**

To enable Cabinet to consider the future membership of the Newcastles of the World Alliance in light of Scrutiny recommendations.

**Recommendations**

**To cease membership of the Newcastles of the World Alliance and to allocate the budget to supporting local business development initiatives.**

**Reasons**

The Council has been asked to confirm the medium term commitment to financially contribute to the Newcastles of the World Alliance paid Secretariat. The Economic Development and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the benefits of membership in light of the Council's broad financial position. Scrutiny recommended that the Council withdraws from the Alliance to enable resources to be directed to activities which deliver priority local outcomes.

1.    **Background**

1.1    The Newcastles of the World Alliance links towns and cities called Newcastle across the world in a twinning type of partnership. The Council has been a member of the 'Newcastles of the World' alliance since 1998 and has attended the biennial summit on most occasions since. Prior to the 2012 summit, very little practical action had taken place to establish tangible benefits from the participants' involvement, other than the biennial gathering which has tended to focus upon cultural, educational and tourism issues. The most notable activities have related to pockets of activity in relation to educational links.

1.2    In 2012 Newcastle-upon-Tyne City Council sought to re-energise and re-focus the Alliance in response to the "Joint Declaration" that was signed at the end of the 2012 summit. Newcastle-upon-Tyne City Council has provided a secretariat role, setting up a website ([www.newcastlesoftheworld.com](http://www.newcastlesoftheworld.com)), producing a quarterly newsletter and creating a Facebook page and Twitter account.

1.3    Newcastle-upon-Tyne City Council also produced a development plan indicating the minimum recommended requirements to underpin success in delivering the aims of the Alliance as follows:

- A regularly updated website supported by other social media – (in place but needs to be promoted more and the functionality improved)
- A regular newsletter (which includes stories from the Borough)

- Regular contact between the political leadership
- A contact person responsible for regular communications and links, and whose work is endorsed and supported by the political leadership.
- A Newcastle's of the World central coordinator to link the leaders and contacts, and to oversee the work of the alliance.
- Champions, or lead members, for each major initiative or project.
- Regular funds that can be drawn upon to support activity.
- A forward programme for the hosting of future summits.

- 1.4 The Newcastle's of the World Alliance Declaration 2014 highlights nine key commitments:
1. To implement the paid secretariat to take forward the actions.
  2. To share information and best practice on a range of common issues including employment, young people, affordable housing, older people, town centres, historic buildings and sustainability.
  3. To improve communications between the Newcastle's
  4. Create a shared tourism strategy and city branding
  5. Encourage opportunities between businesses
  6. Pursue EU and international funding
  7. Support youth involvement through the youth conference
  8. Develop educational, cultural and business links
  9. To welcome and accept the invitation by Newcastle, Ontario to host the tenth conference in 2016.

## 2. **Issues**

- 2.1 In line with the 2012 and 2014 Declarations there was a commitment to have a paid Secretariat commencing early 2015. The Council has committed to the first years membership of £2,500 for 2015/16. The Secretariat role based on 15 hours per week enables clear accountability for delivering the bi-annual summit event and the range of activities listed in the declaration have greater likelihood of being delivered with a paid officer. Without the services of a formal secretariat, it is unlikely that the Alliance can progress any actions (a view that is corroborated by the limited evidence of tangible outcomes before 2012).
- 2.2 The Economic Development and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the comparable levels of funding from other Newcastle's, the option to support the Alliance for 2015/16 enabling a more in depth review of the paid Secretariat in December 2015 and the benefits of this investment compared to other funding allocated to economic development and local cultural grants.
- 2.3 Scrutiny considered the above development plan and the potential benefits are in sharing information and best practice. It was acknowledged that there are some educational benefits however education is not a responsibility of a Borough Council; although there are cultural benefits the Council's resources would be better focused on local cultural activities; that the number of tourist visits generated through the Alliance would be extremely small and that securing inward investment through employers locating to the Borough would be improbable. Scrutiny considered the option to invest in local schemes such as the Business Boost scheme which supports the development of local businesses. Alternatively this could be combined with the Town Centre Partnership's Enterprise scheme to enable business start-ups or to support the market traders with new initiatives such as on-line booking and payment. The Council currently has no budget for supporting local business development and by utilising this small budget of £3,000 this will enable the development of local initiatives.

## 3. **Proposal and Reasons for Preferred Solution**

3.1 It is proposed that the Scrutiny recommendation to cease membership of the Newcastle of the World Alliance is supported as the funding could be better utilised to deliver local economic development priorities. The Council could then allocate the budget to supporting local business initiatives.

4. **Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities**

4.1. The Alliance has very limited impact in delivering the corporate priorities; however economic development is a key corporate priority.

5. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

5.1 There are no implications.

6. **Equality Impact Assessment**

6.1 There are no equality issues arising from this decision.

7. **Financial and Resource Implications**

7.1 At present there is budgetary provision of £3,000 in the council's base revenue budget. There would be a modest in-kind cost of providing ongoing officer support which would be achieved by re-prioritising the work programme of the Regeneration team. There has been some in-kind support provided by past Mayors and, on two occasions, by his partner but that cannot be assumed or relied upon for future years.

7.2 The Council has previously committed to the first year's membership of £2,500, it would be expected that this would be paid annually. In terms of involvement with the bi-annual Conference the main costs comprise the delegate fee of about £700 along with the cost of transport (in most cases likely to involve flights). In the past this Council has generally funded two or three official delegate places although some representatives have self-funded their attendance.

8. **Major Risks**

8.1 There are no major risk implications.

9. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

9.1 In March 2013 Cabinet agreed to contribute up to £2,500 per annum towards the costs of a secretariat.

10. **Background Papers**

10.1 Newcastle's of the World Alliance Declaration 2014