

NEWCASTLES OF THE WORLD ALLIANCE

Submitted by: Neale Clifton, Executive Director, Regeneration and Development

Portfolio: Cross-cutting but predominantly Planning, Regeneration and Town Centres

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report:

To establish whether Members wish to continue participating in the 'Newcastles of the World' Alliance, specifically with the following aims:

- a) To further develop business, educational and cultural links with other Newcastles around the world;
- b) To work in partnership with Newcastle-upon-Tyne and other members of the Alliance to progress an Alliance website and investment of officer time into further developing tourism links;
- c) To support the establishment of an Alliance secretariat and to prioritise officer resources in order to ensure that the council is a credible partner;
- d) To commit 'in principle' to attend the next World Conference in 2014 and to prioritise officer resources from January 2014 to prepare for the event to maximise the outcomes and;
- e) To support the Mayoress and work with Keele University, Newcastle College, Staffordshire County Council and local schools to develop the Youth aspects of the Alliance (including education).

Decision required:

Do members wish, in principle, to continue participating in the Newcastles of the World Alliance? If so:

Recommendations:

- a) That the council endorses the overall priority themes of the draft Development Plan and agrees to ongoing participation in the Alliance, including a preparedness to contribute up to £2,500 p.a. towards secretarial costs met from the existing budget.
- b) That the council commits to working with appropriate partners to improve global business, educational and cultural links to other Newcastles.
- c) That the council actively supports the development of an Alliance website, including developing tourism and media links to promote 'good news' stories about the Borough.
- d) That the council agrees, in principle, to attend the 2014 summit, subject to consideration as part of the budget-setting process in 2014/15.
- e) That the council agrees to support partners in developing the youth aspect of the Alliance.
- f) That officers be authorised to engage with the current secretariat on the basis set out in this report and to report back to members on progress with the Alliance or when key decisions are required.
- g) That the matter be referred to the Economic Development and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their comments.

Reasons

The Newcastle of the World Alliance offers potential to develop effective global business, educational and cultural links for the benefit of the borough's various communities of interest. If the council considers that the Alliance provides a mechanism to achieve such benefits it will be important to ensure that the level of resources required represents good value for money.

1. Background

- 1.1. The Council has been a member of the 'Newcastles of the World' partnership since 1998 and has attended the biennial summit on most occasions since. Previous Cabinet reports have highlighted the potential benefits of the Alliance and discussed the setting up of a joint website and maximising links between the participating towns.
- 1.2. Prior to the 2012 summit, very little practical action has 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. However, Newcastle-upon-Tyne City Council, a relative newcomer and host to the 2012 summit, has kick-started a re-energisation of the Alliance in response to the "Joint Declaration" that was signed at the end of that event (see Appendix). In the immediate short-term Newcastle-upon-Tyne City Council has provided a secretariat role. Also a website has been established (www.newcastlesoftheworld.com), a newsletter has been produced containing good news stories from members of the Alliance and a Facebook page has been created.

2. Issues

- 2.1. 'Newcastles of the World is an alliance of towns and cities that share the name Newcastle. The main aim of the Alliance is to share, enjoy and promote interest in their varied heritage, environment and culture, in particular creating educational opportunity and economic benefit for the people of the respective Newcastles. Newcastle-upon Tyne City Council has prepared a draft development plan which seeks to deliver a series of specific outcomes to further these aims.
- 2.2. The key extracts from the draft "Development plan" are as follows:
 - 2.2.1. Involve all or some of the Newcastles in the one or more of seven main areas of joint working, possibly identifying a lead Newcastle for each area and selecting one or two projects to tackle.
 - 2.2.1.1. **Tourism** - To develop a common Newcastles tourism brand that can be promoted to the citizens of our towns, cities and surrounding areas
 - 2.2.1.2. **Supporting good governance** in our municipalities
 - 2.2.1.3. **Business and economic development** - Identifying key business sectors where there is opportunity to collaborate and trade
 - 2.2.1.4. **Education and Young People** - encouraging our young people to develop contacts with each other, to help them have a better understanding of the world.
 - 2.2.1.5. **Culture and Heritage** – building contacts between our museums and galleries, artists and arts groups, participating in global heritage research projects, etc.
 - 2.2.1.6. **Sport** - International visits and tours, competitions and tournaments, best practice ideas for widening participation and encouraging healthy lifestyles

2.2.1.7. **The environment/sustainability** - Sharing experience and skills in best environmental practice in our municipalities, Involving our young people in conservation projects

2.2.2. The draft development plan indicates minimum recommended requirements to underpin success in delivering the aims of the Alliance as follows:

2.2.2.1. A good quality **website**, regularly updated, and supported by other social media – (in place but needs to be promoted more and the functionality improved)

2.2.2.2. A regular **newsletter** that can be shared widely by each Newcastle

2.2.2.3. Regular **contact between the political leadership** to track, progress and support the commitments that have been made.

2.2.2.4. A **contact person** in each Newcastle who is identified as responsible for regular communications and links, and whose work is endorsed and supported by the political leadership.

2.2.2.5. A Newcastle of the World **central coordinator** to link the leaders and contacts, and to oversee the work of the alliance.

2.2.2.6. Champions, or **lead members**, for each major initiative or project.

2.2.2.7. Regular **funds** that can be drawn upon to support activity.

2.2.2.8. A forward **programme** for the **hosting** of future summits.

2.2.3. The draft development plan goes on to review the following options for project/programme co-ordination, development and funding:

2.2.3.1. A paid-for secretariat (full or part-time) of at least one person to oversee and coordinate the work of the alliance at each summit and between summits.

2.2.3.2. A volunteer (from any of the Newcastles) to act as permanent coordinator.

2.2.3.3. Rotation of the secretariat on the basis of the hosting programme.

2.2.3.4. A mix of the above.

2.2.3.5. Funding options for a full-time secretariat – each Newcastle to pay an annual subscription,

2.2.3.5.1. A flat rate based on population band

2.2.3.5.2. A sliding scale, say £25 for every 1000 population

2.2.3.5.3. Combination of the two, e.g. flat rate of £1000 and £10 per 1000 population

2.3. In view of the above the borough council must now determine whether it wishes to continue participating in this Alliance taking account of the potential outcomes and the resource implications, set in the context of the Council Plan, Service Strategies and Plans and associated revenue budgets.

2.3.1. The Development Plan's anticipated outcomes in relation to 'Tourism', 'Business and Economic development' and 'Education and Young People' would support a number of objectives in the council's Economic Development Strategy, particularly those related to

‘strengthening the business base’, ‘transforming ambition’ and ‘transforming perceptions’.

2.3.2. The Development Plan supports the Council Plan priorities and outcomes, in particular that local people will be able to access opportunities for personal development and growth (Borough of Opportunity); levels of cultural activity and participation in the arts will have increased (Healthy and Active Community); Councillors will be community champions and powerful community advocates. Increasing the resilience in communities by building effective and strong partnerships across the borough and utilising public and community resources (A co-operative council).

2.4. Bearing in mind this is a two tier authority, education links ideally need the support of the County Council (ideally along with local H&FE providers), if they are to move forward significantly. Tourism in the Borough is carried out with support from the county-wide Destination Management Partnership. So if the Council wishes to support the Alliance then it is most appropriate to channel delivery of Tourism and Education links via the DMP and County Council-led education networks where possible.

2.5. With regard to business opportunities the Council could exploit the scope to promote inward investment opportunities by providing links into the Inward Investment service for Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire. Realistically the promotion of trading activities would be best handled via links into the North Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the UK Trade and Investment body. This is likely to require, by agreement, some re-alignment of current service arrangements from these organisations.

2.6. Clearly with all areas of work there is a decision as to what level of resources are invested and this usually takes into consideration the likely outcome and benefits. Historically the Council has not allocated significant resources to the Alliance (there has been a modest revenue budget earmarked and there has been very little ‘in-kind’ officer time dedicated to the Alliance’s work). A significant part of the work undertaken in this last year has been undertaken directly by the Mayor and Mayoress with limited officer support.

2.7. Whilst further investment in the Staffordshire Destination Management Partnership may generate greater returns for tourism, relatively low level support, such as the linking of the Council website to a Newcastle’s website and submitting press releases to the newsletter will highlight tourism and education opportunities between the areas. The Newcastle’s Alliance offers a unique basis for education and learning particularly for younger children that could link to core areas of the national curriculum. As indicated earlier, the County Council’s input in this regard would be vitally important if sustainable links are to be forged.

2.8. It is acknowledged that, if the Alliance is to become more formalised with the aim of delivering clear outcomes, then there should be a core resource to call upon. By having a secretariat not only would there be clear accountability for delivering the bi-annual summit event but the range of activities listed in the draft Development Plan have greater likelihood of being delivered. In turn this helps the council to demonstrate what is being delivered for the benefit of its local community. Your officers consider that the option of establishing a full-time secretariat is not justifiable at this stage. In the event that a formal shared secretariat is preferred (i.e. if there is no prospect of securing a volunteer or host country secretariat) then a contribution of £2,500 p.a. to enable the establishment of a part-time secretariat is considered both reasonable and appropriate and can be funded from the existing budgetary provision.

3. Options Considered

3.1. Ceasing membership altogether – having been a member since its inception, and with no other ‘twinning’ arrangements in place, it may seem a waste of past resources to cease membership altogether, particularly in the light of the recent re-energisation of the Alliance following the 2012 summit. Nevertheless the council should satisfy itself that the draft development plan ambitions are

aligned with the council's agreed priorities and that involvement with this Alliance represents good value for money.

- 3.2. Passive support (no input other than attending biennial summits) – this is not a viable option. If the council is not prepared to support the development of the Alliance it would not be a credible partner in the eyes of the other participating countries.
- 3.3. Active support (web links, educational links, etc) – recommended option to maximise the benefits of the re-energisation of the Alliance and fully explore potential educational and tourism links.

4. Proposal

- 4.1 That the council endorses the overall priority themes of the draft Development Plan and agrees to ongoing participation in the Alliance, including a preparedness to contribute up to £2,500 p.a. towards secretarial costs met from the existing budget.
- 4.2 That the council commits to working with appropriate partners to improve global business, educational and cultural links to other Newcastles.
- 4.3 That the council actively supports the development of an Alliance website, including developing tourism and media links to promote 'good news' stories about the Borough.
- 4.4 That the council agrees, in principle, to attend the 2014 summit, subject to consideration as part of the budget-setting process in 2014/15.
- 4.5 That the council agrees to support partners in developing the youth aspect of the alliance.
- 4.6 That officers be authorised to engage with the current secretariat on the basis set out in this report and to report back to members on progress with the Alliance or when key decisions are required.
- 4.7 That the matter be referred to the Economic Development and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their comments.

5. Reasons for Preferred Solution

- 5.1. The Newcastles of the World Alliance offers potential to develop effective global business, educational and cultural links for the benefit of the borough's various communities of interest. If the council considers that the Alliance provides a mechanism to achieve such benefits it will be important to ensure that the level of resources required is both available and represents good value for money.

6. Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities

- 6.1. Outcomes from these actions will impact the 'Borough of Opportunity' corporate priority, in terms of tourism, quality of life and educational opportunities.

7. Legal and Statutory Implications

- 7.1. There is no statutory requirement to carry out these recommendations.

8. Equality Impact Assessment

- 8.1. An Equality Impact Assessment has not been carried out but the recommendations will help to engender a better understanding of the world at large, particularly for younger people through links with schools.

9. Financial and Resource Implications

- 9.1. If the Council is serious about being part of the Newcastle's World Alliance then it will be necessary for resources to be allocated as part of the budget setting process. The draft Development Plan highlights the potential level of expectation regarding core funding to maintain core services through a secretariat; this could amount to £10,000 p.a. for this council if the full-time secretariat

option were to be pursued. A part-time secretariat would cost about £2,500 p.a. Of course the volunteer option would require no contribution whilst the rolling secretariat option would only require funding on those occasions when the council may offer to host a summit.

9.2. 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). Looking forward if the Council attended the next Alliance conference this level of cost should be budgeted for in addition to the annual subscription referred to above. It would therefore be appropriate to identify the number of attendees and allocate an appropriate budget (historically the official delegation has comprised the Mayor, Leader or Portfolio Holder and a senior officer). It should be noted that the expenses incurred in 2012 were minimal as the event was hosted by Newcastle upon Tyne City Council whereby the Mayor and Mayoress represented the council's interests unaccompanied by any other members or officers.

9.3. 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.

10. **Major Risks**

10.1 There are no major risk implications other than potential reputational damage. The latter should be mitigated by having a clear business plan with outcomes that are aligned with the council's key priorities.

11. **Key Decision Information**

11.1 There is no key decision arising in this case.

12. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

12.1 Minutes 664 (2002), 1117 (2003) and 818 (2007) refer

13. **List of Appendices**

14. **Background Papers**

14.1 Draft development Plan including Joint Declaration from the 2012 summit (available on request).