

ESSEX AND SUFFOLK CONGRESS

2016 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

SATURDAY 8TH OCTOBER 2016

AT THE OAK TREE CENTRE COLCHESTER

A warm welcome was given to all delegates by Valerie Francis Chairman of Colchester and District Twinning Association. She introduced the people on the top table.

Mary Dunk also welcomed everyone and explained the day's proceedings. She mentioned Brexit and stressed that we should explore possibilities for the future of twinning. One was using the web to bringing twinning into the future.

Theresa Higgins, from Colchester, talked about her connections with France; she has French relatives and has also lived in France. Her first experience of Twinning was to Beauvais as part of the hockey team. She was excited when she moved to Colchester and found it is twinned with Avignon as she has cousins who live there. Colchester used to be part of the European Youth Games which was a good way to get young people involved in Twinning. The Twinning Society also used to run the school exchange programme with Avignon and Wetzlar. We are now "Europe and beyond". We are linked with Yangzhou in China and have signed a sister city link with them. As mayor she took an escort with her on trips abroad; this was mainly her husband but she also took her 26 year old daughter or other children with her sometimes. The daughter has written a very good blog about Twinning from a young person's perspective which is worth exploring - [gotboredlefttown .com](https://gotboredlefttown.com). <https://gotboredlefttown.com/2015/12/13/sisters-from-other-misters/>. She never realised before the twinning was an active peace-keeping mission.

Nigel Hildreth, former head of music at Colchester Sixth Form College talked about his experiences of twinning both with the local youth orchestra and students from the Sixth Form College. For 20 years he has had a link with the music school in our twin town of Wetzlar. He put up the phrase "Musik ist eine Sprache ohne grenzen." (Music is a language without borders.) He mentioned all the projects he has done with not only Germany but also France, Italy, Sweden, Estonia. He said that it is a good way to link British young people with those from other countries.

Neil Hornsby from Brentwood then spoke about taking over as chairman just after the Brexit vote. He mentioned that their objectives were nothing to do with Brexit and he felt that we should continue as usual. It is actually more important now to strengthen our links with Europe. The original contact started with two language teachers from the two towns – Brentwood and Montbazou - and continued from there on. They have social events to raise money for twinning events, such as a Fête des Rois in January. He outlined their vision for the future of twinning in Brentwood and events that they would like to see happen.

We then separated into small groups to discuss some basic questions about fund raising and how we allocate the money. How do we promote ourselves? How do local people know about us? What are our plans for the future?

Feedback:

- It is easier for small villages and towns to promote twinning.
- Use library for twinning events.
- Use the coach journeys to explore points of interest along the way.
- Make a video of your trip.
- Explore European funding for twinning – especially projects for young people
- Fund raising: crêpes stall, quiz night, casino night, murder mystery evening,
- Social events to encourage new members
- Who do you involve in trips? Invite teachers, local minister, etc
- What do we use the money we raise for? Hosting visitors from twin towns, grants to allow young people to visit towns, equipment for talks (projector, etc)
- Video project with input from each of the twin towns
- Arts project with twin town – Arts Council??
- Promote twinning through the tourist guides
- Schools – use technology e.g. Skype, video conferencing, face time
- There is “e-twinning” which schools can use

Congress business

Representatives from the following Twinning associations attended: Beccles, Bury Compiègne, Brentwood Twinning Association, Chelmsford Twinning Association, Colchester Twinning Society, Dunmow Dourdon, Felixstowe Twinning Association, Gosfield Twinning Association, Great Waltham, Halesworth & District, Manningtree & District/Frankenber Partnership Association, Sible Hedingham Twinning, Sudbury, Witham Twinning Association.

1) Apologies for absence

Lowestoft, Epping, Wortham and Burgate, Eileen Clayton –Sudbury, Dagmar Grafton – Manningtree, Verena Carr - Eye and District, Jane Marsland – Hadleigh, D.J. Whiteing - Treasurer

2) Minutes of the last meeting held in October 2015

A change of date was made – minutes of 2014 **not** 2015

The minutes were agreed: Gloria Nicholls proposed and Val Francis seconded the motion.

3) Matters arising

The two German towns who were looking to form contacts are still looking for a twin town. Another signatory has not been found for bank account.

4) Treasurer’s report

The treasurer was not present but copies of the report were given to attendees.

He was congratulated by the meeting on the clarity of the report. Everyone was happy with the treasurer's report.

5) Election of Officers

There are two officers; Chair and Treasurer. David Whiteing is happy to stand again as treasurer. Mary Dunk would like to step aside as Chair, but no nominations have been received. The job involves maintaining the website and contacting delegates for congress. Mary said, however, that she is happy to continue. This was unanimously passed by the meeting. Mary would like more ideas for our website.

6) Future of *one Suffolk* website

We have been able to use *one Suffolk* free of charge for many years. However, they have now decided to charge people for using the service - £30 per year + VAT. Another organisation has approached Mary for a cost of £100 per year which includes tuition and help to maintain the site. We were asked which option we would like. It was proposed by Richard Holland that we stick with *one Suffolk*. This was seconded by Nigel Hildreth. The motion was carried.

7) AOB

We will make a list of everyone's e-mail addresses at the end of the meeting.

8) Date and venue for the next meeting

October 7th or 14th 2017 at Felixstowe