

Minutes of meeting-Bridgwater-Marsa Twinning Association

Monday 10/03/2014

Held at the Mayors Parlour.

Present- the Mayor Dave Loveridge and Shirley, Deputy Mayor Steve Austen and Stella, Mike Grabner, Tricia Brown, Pat and Steve Morgan, Barbara and Gordon Taylor, Joseph Abela and speaker Councillor Brian Smedley.

Apologies- Di Grabner, James Morgan, Helmi Holder-Wolfe and Danny Houton.

Mike Grabner thanked **DL** for the use of his Parlour to hold the meeting and welcomed Brian Smedley who then gave the meeting a very interesting presentation about the origins of twinning after the war to try and bring communities together to share information and learn about each other. He explained how the other 3 groups had started with a short history. Bridgwater Town Council will continue to give financial support of £300 yearly to help with running the groups run by their own committee, but Sedgemoor District Council does not fund anything. At the Town Council meeting last week it was agreed to set up a Bridgwater Twinning Forum (this idea originated from us) so that information could be shared and to support each other's projects. This body would meet 3 times a year on a voluntary basis and there would be an annual conference open to all international groups active in the town. The council also recognised and supported the La Ciotat link group (France) to be run as part of the Bridgwater International programme www.bridgwaterinternational.co.uk they also supported the development of 2 potential twinings with Priverno (Italy) and Sarvar (Hungary) under the auspices of Bridgwater International. The council also confirmed that the role of the Mayor would continue to include civic support to twinning groups, the level of which was at the discretion of each mayor and any receptions, travel etc would be met within the Mayoral allowance- to be reviewed at a later stage.

BS explained that there is now no central UK body for twinning, so any towns wishing to find partners should go through the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) who can also advise on EU funding www.ccre.org

There is a new programme for The Europe for Citizens programme and Erasmus which Bridgwater College is involved. **BS** has given us all the necessary names and email address etc.

The meeting then had a discussion and asked questions. **JA** explained 2 groups (who were self funded) had been to Malta one disabled persons group and last April Wembdon Scouts visited and linked with Marsa Scouts. Many other private visits had been made by members. **JA** had hosted the President of the Maria Regina band club at Carnival and he was keen to take part in Carnival. Carnival was discussed and would meet criteria from the EU but need to speak to Carlos Mascarell Vilar in Brussels who **BS** has been in contact with. As there are similar groups in both areas may be possible for funding-it may also meet lifelong learning with all the skills in carnival and Erasmus will include young people. Many of these details could be discussed at the Forum planned which the Town Council will facilitate fairly soon. We will need to have some plans for the future and as knowledge will be shared may well help us.

MG thanked **BS** for a very informative and thought provoking presentation.

Chairman's Report. - **MG** had not heard from Rita Jones President of Carnival at all even though she had promised to speak to him after their meeting in January – he was very disappointed but felt we needed to have something more concrete to offer them.

He ,PM and SM had met with Jay Burgess the artist of the Bridgwater Montage and chose the painting that hangs in the Mayors Parlour as they felt it had more recognisable landmarks of the town. He also gave us a discount because of our connections with the Mayor **MG** thanked **DL** (it cost us £ 100 plus £10 for package) **MG** had driven to Wiveliscombe to collect it from Jay's home. **DL** asked if it was the original painting but **MG** explained it was a limited edition print **MG** thanked **JA** for kindly taking it with him on his recent visit **SM** asked if there was a cost as it was Ryan air but none, you can take 2 pieces of hand luggage so no cost. **JA** had met Claudette Spencer by chance (wife of Marsa councillor Dominic) and asked when he could deliver the painting- there was a council meeting that evening so **JA** was able to present it to the council who were delighted. The framing was discussed and explained the Association would pay but Marsa council had a vote and it was passed- they will frame it. The meeting sent their thanks.

MG asked if **DL** would as promised provide the dedication wording and council seal, he would. **PM** had written the dedication and **JA** had translated it into Maltese so **PM** gave them to **DL** who would see his PA on Wednesday and Judie would print it for us. **PM** will post it to Marsa-will need to get new address but needs to be there ASAP so it can be framed as the official opening is 28th March. Unfortunately it is with regret that no one is able to go to Malta for this occasion. **PM** explained that the Prime Minister Dr Joseph Muscat will be performing the opening ceremony.

Secretary Report- PM explained that last year Dominic Spencer had a request from the Marsa Football Nursery who would like to link with one in Bridgwater. **PM** had sent several email via websites of teams in the town but recently had a apologetic email from Victoria Park Rangers who had a complete change of committee and had no idea there was a website and responded to my enquiry. I contacted **DS** who is trying to contact new committee in Marsa- so I am still waiting to hear back. **BT** and **TB** said there are teams at Wembdon which **PM** was not aware of.

JA has a 12yr old visiting him in the summer who apparently is a good footballer who would like contact with teams here, it will be a slight problem as it is the "closed "season. **DS** children are taking part in the Palm Sunday Pageant this year they are 6 and 4 years old. **TB** had contacted **PM** re school but will let **TB** explain. **PM** belongs to a group on Facebook that is to do with Maltese Culture and a question was asked what are your connections with Malta- she replied that we think we are the first English town to twin but someone thought that Hartlepool were twinned with Sliema. It was suggested that we check this with **DS** and Sliema website. **PM** will do.

Membership secretary report- TB explained that the teacher at St Mary's who had been involved had resigned but a new representative called Danny Houton contacted **TB**. He is very keen and contacted **TB** as he had been left no details. He sent his apologies as he has a governors meeting this evening. **PM** contacted **CS** who sent a complete listing of all the staff at the school her children go to which was the one that Mrs Mead had made contact with and was going well. It is San Gorg Preca College, Marsa Primary school. It was asked why Wembdon School has stopped their link – **TB** explained that the children had moved to another class and a new teacher. The original teacher was the daughter of a member who has Maltese background. **TB** has tried very hard to contact Penrose School; who have moved site and despite numerous emails and phone calls has had no response.

Graham and Kay Granter still wish to be members but as having some health problems cannot attend at the moment.

Treasurer's report- SM explained we were in credit with £620.62p.

The total at the moment for the picture and packing cost £110. **DL** asked when the membership fees were due- **TB** explained October at the AGM. **DL** and **SL** would like to continue as members as they will have left post in May.

Any Other Business- BT asked if Marsa Scouts would be coming to visit our Scouts- **PM** had not heard anything but there appeared to be two parts of the unit, the Band which seemed to travel to various countries but when they play at different events in Malta **JA** explained would be paid so perhaps this is how they can afford to travel. The Scouts appeared to be (and this was explained to **PM** and **SM** a long time ago) less well off as the area is not very well off. There was a discussion about football teams and home hosting. **SM** asked if we need to have CRB checks- yes we do it is now very strict and has been for some years. In Malta **JA** says there does not seem to be the same worries.

MG has an idea about an Oompha band (suggested by **DS**) which has members from all over the island who travel all over the world and are self financing the only thing we would need to do is find accommodation for about 50 people which may be a problem. **DL** explained that **BS** has lots of contacts around the area such as hostels etc. This could be something to think about as they could take part in carnival.

PM asked **SA** who has been nominated as our next Mayor if he will be sending an official invitation to the Mayoral inauguration on 16th May 2014 to Francis Debono the Mayor of Marsa - he will be seeing the Town Clerk Alan Hurford soon to do this. The Deputy Mayor will be Lee Redman.

TB and **BT** invited us to the Wembdon Ladies Fashion Show 21st March 7.30hrs at St Georges School Wembdon £3.50p On the door. **Stella A** asked if **PM** will send an email- she will.

Next meeting

Tuesday 6th May 2014.7.30 hrs at the Mayors Parlour, High Street Bridgwater.