

ANGUS COUNCIL**POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 8 May 2001****LATVIA – FRIENDSHIP AGREEMENT WITH SIGULDA**

Report by Chief Executive

SUMMARY

To report receipt of an invitation from the Mayor of Sigulda, Latvia for a delegation to attend the Town Festival to be held from 25-27 May 2001, to seek authorisation to hold discussions with representatives of other international partners attending the festival about possible future joint working arrangements and to conclude arrangements for the forthcoming visit to Angus and surrounding area by the orchestra of the Music School of Sigulda in August 2001.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended:-

- 1.1 that the Committee accept the invitation from the Mayor of Sigulda to attend the Town Festival to be held from 25-27 May 2001 and to authorise the Provost to attend accompanied by the Acting Director of Cultural Services and the Corporate Support Manager;
- 1.2 to authorise discussions to be held with delegates from other international partners who are to be present at the Festival on a range of relevant issues including the possibility of developing future joint working arrangements; and
- 1.3 to authorise the delegation to conclude arrangements for a visit to Angus in August 2001 by the Music School of Sigulda.

2. FRIENDSHIP AGREEMENT

- 2.1 Members will recall (Policy and Resources Committee, 21 March 1999) that a Friendship Agreement was signed in May 1999 with the town of Sigulda in Latvia which was the culmination of a series of successful visits to Latvia including a trade mission.
- 2.2 The town of Sigulda is located a short distance north of the principal City of Riga and ideally located for establishing and maintaining contacts for future development of trade, culture and sport related activities. The town is particularly keen to work with Angus on projects related to the promotion of cultural links between the two areas but to date have found it difficult to identify a suitable project for possible EC Funding.
- 2.3 In May 2000 the Mayor and members of the Sigulda Town Council gave a presentation on the development plans for their town and surrounding area over the next five years which were aimed at developing a tourism infrastructure with a particular goal of hosting the Luge Championships in 2003. The Angus Council delegation provided the Town Council with information about Angus Council's international activities and outlined the expertise available to assist them in attracting EC support for their plans. Several of the visiting delegations offered to act as partners in a joint project should Sigulda Town Council wish to pursue such an initiative. It was expected that the Town Council would

be making further enquiries with the Latvian Government and local EC representatives in this regard.

2.4 During the short visit which will be hosted by the Mayor of Sigulda it is proposed that the following issues would be pursued:-

- to explore ways in which Angus can be further promoted in the area as an access point to Angus and to Scotland as a whole for Latvian business and tourism;
- to finalise arrangements for a visit to Angus and other venues in the area by the highly respected Music School in August 2001;
- to hold discussions with the other international partners which Sigulda has and who are present at the annual Festival with a view to exploring the possibility of promoting multi-partner projects. (Countries represented would normally include Denmark, Sweden, Estonia, Lithuania and Germany and significant interest has been expressed by delegates from these countries on previous occasions about the possibility of developing stronger links with Angus.)
- to follow-up on proposals made on a previous occasion to explore the possibility of sharing information and expertise in relation to the development of outdoor education as Sigulda is located on the edge of Latvia's National Park and is the centre of a wide range of summer and winter outdoor activities in the country; and
- to explore, in response to previous expressions of interest, the potential for other forms of cultural links and exchanges e.g. in the field of art, music and traditional dance.

2.5 The Provost has asked that she be accompanied on this occasion by the Acting Director of Cultural Services as this is a particular area of activity which has not yet been fully explored and which holds potential for enriching the relationship between the two areas and by the Corporate Support Manager who has been involved in a number of previous visits to the area and has developed strong contacts both within the town of Sigulda and with other major institutions in the City of Riga itself.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 It is estimated that the travel and subsistence costs associated with the visit would be approximately £1,100 with accommodation and subsistence while in Sigulda provided at the expense of the Sigulda Town Council. This amount can be met from the Twinning Budget in the Chief Executive's Department for 2001/2002.

4. HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

There are no Human Rights issues arising from the contents of this report.

5. CONSULTATIONS

The Directors of Finance and Law and Administration have been consulted on the terms of this report.

A B Watson
Chief Executive

Note: No background papers as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 were relied on to any material extent in preparing this paper.

GM/BAK
27 March 2001