



Report to Policy Committee

Author/Lead Officer of Report: Nik Hamilton,
Investment Team Manager

Tel: 07554 555 749

Report of: Executive Director – City Futures
Report to: Strategy & Resources Policy Committee
Date of Decision: 21 February 2024
Subject: International Update 2023-24

Type of Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) undertaken	Initial <input type="checkbox"/>	Full <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Insert EIA reference number and attach EIA	2589	
Has appropriate consultation/engagement taken place?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Has a Climate Impact Assessment (CIA) been undertaken?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If YES, give details as to whether the exemption applies to the full report / part of the report and/or appendices and complete below:-		
<p><i>“The (report/appendix) is not for publication because it contains exempt information under Paragraph (insert relevant paragraph number) of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).”</i></p>		

Purpose of Report:

In November 2023, Strategy & Resources Committee approved proposals for a new Partner City Policy, including assessment criteria for the purposes of assessing new approaches and reviewing the effectiveness of existing international relationships. This report provides a summary of the assessments recently undertaken in respect of both existing relationships and approaches received and makes recommendations in respect of decisions required of the Committee. The report also provides a summary of activities and events, linked to our international relations that have taken place over the last 12 months.

Recommendations:

It is recommended:

1. For the reasons set out in the report, that the City Council:
 - a) Relinquishes the relationship with **Anshan**;

- b) Does not reinitiate the Trade and Collaboration Agreements with the cities of **Daqing** and **Nanchang**;
 - c) Retains the relationship with **Chengdu**;
 - d) Retains links with **Bapaume**;
 - e) Acknowledges the links with **Estelí** whilst acknowledging that this relationship is community-driven, rather than Council-led;
 - f) Retains links with **Bochum**; **Kawasaki**; **Khmelnyskyi** and **Pittsburgh**;
 - g) Takes no further action at this time in respect of the relationship with **Donetsk**;
 - h) Acknowledges the historical and community links in the case of **Kotli** and the historical links with **Kitwe**, noting that the civic relationship in respect of each city is effectively dormant;
 - i) Enters into a Friendship Agreement with **Nablus**; and
 - j) Carries out further work in respect of identifying the potential opportunities with **South Korea**.
2. That the Committee acknowledges the important role of the Lord Mayor in respect of fostering new international relationships and helping to maintain existing links with Partner Cities.

Background Papers:
(Insert details of any background papers used in the compilation of the report.)

Lead Officer to complete:-		
1	I have consulted the relevant departments in respect of any relevant implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist, and comments have been incorporated / additional forms completed / EIA completed.	Finance: Adrian Hart
		Legal: Andrea Simpson
		Equalities & Consultation: Bashir Khan
		Climate: Victoria Penman
<i>Legal, financial/commercial and equalities implications must be included within the report and the name of the officer consulted must be included above.</i>		
2	SLB member who approved submission:	Kate Martin, Executive Director – City Futures
3	Committee Chair consulted:	Councillor Tom Hunt
4	I confirm that all necessary approval has been obtained in respect of the implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist and that the report has been approved for submission to the Committee by the SLB member indicated at 2. In addition, any additional forms have been completed and signed off as required at 1.	
	Lead Officer Name: Nik Hamilton	Job Title: Investment Team Manager
	Date: 21 February 2024	

1. PROPOSAL

- 1.1 In November 2023, Strategy & Resources Committee approved proposals for a new Partner City Policy, including assessment criteria for the purposes of assessing new approaches and reviewing the effectiveness of existing international relationships. This report provides a summary of the assessments recently undertaken in respect of both existing relationships and approaches received and makes recommendations in respect of decisions required of the Committee. The report also provides a summary of activities and events, linked to our international relations that have taken place over the last 12 months.
- 1.2 Sheffield, as England's fourth largest city, is an ambitious outward looking city on the up, and continues to have a contribution to make to the world, building upon our strengths and seeking to collaborate with international partners for mutual benefit. In order to achieve this, there needs to be a more considered, serious approach in how we manage our international relationships.
- 1.3 In particular, the focus of Sheffield City Council's international activity going forward should be based upon a smaller number of cities where specific opportunities and projects envisaged to bring mutual tangible benefit can be identified.
- 1.4 Sheffield has established relationships with numerous international cities, through Twinning, Sister City, Trade & Collaboration or Friendship links. Following on from the approval by Strategy and Resources Policy Committee of a Partner City Policy (the final version of which is attached to this report as Appendix B) in November 2023, an exercise has been undertaken to review these relationships, using the assessment framework in the policy to determine whether the Council wishes to retain, relinquish or reinvigorate these relationships.
- 1.5 There is no legal requirement to conduct a review, rather it was felt pertinent to do so, given that many of these relationships have effectively become dormant.
- 1.6 Each location has been considered against the criteria in the assessment framework including: Location Overview; Strategic Fit; Profile; Due Diligence Considerations; Connections; Resources and Purpose. This exercise has been undertaken through consideration of historical information held on file and on the basis of updated information being readily available in the public domain. In some instances, it must be noted that there is little information available.
- 1.7 Appendix A to this report sets out an overview of Sheffield's international relationships:
1. China
 2. Europe

3. The Americas
4. Asia (excluding China)
5. Africa

For each region there is a review of existing relationships and an overview of international activities that have taken place during the 2023-24 Municipal Year.

The Appendix also contains a summary of any other known 'Friendship links'.

Finally, there is consideration of the Middle East and a summary of approaches made by Nablus in the West Bank.

1.8 For the reasons set out in more detail in Appendix A, following the review of existing relationships it is recommended that the City Council:

- Relinquishes relationships with **Anshan** due to the relationship having effectively become dormant;
- Does not reinitiate the Trade and Collaboration Agreements with the cities of **Daqing** and **Nanchang**, given that these agreements expired in 2019 and there have been no tangible benefits evidenced;
- Retains the relationship with **Chengdu**, whilst acknowledging the reduced financial resources at our disposal;
- Retains links with **Bapaume**, given the special circumstances that brought our cities together;
- Acknowledges the links with **Estelí**, given the active support that the Sheffield Estelí Society continues to provide, whilst acknowledging that this relationship is community-driven, rather than Council-led. Effectively, SES are the only community-led organisation focussed on Twinning activities – other associations linked to some of our other Partner Cities have ceased to exist;
- Retains links with **Bochum**; **Kawasaki**; **Khmelnytskyi** and **Pittsburgh**, given that we have current, active engagement with each of these locations, which appears to offer tangible, mutual benefits and presents opportunities for further collaboration;
- Takes no further action in respect of the relationship with **Donetsk**, until such time as the conflict in Ukraine has been resolved, upon which time an appropriate assessment can be undertaken;
- Acknowledges the historical and community links in the case of **Kotli** and the historical links with **Kitwe**, noting that the civic relationship in respect of each city is effectively dormant;
- Enters into a Friendship Agreement with **Nablus**, given the length of time that it has taken to respond to their initial approach, and the fact that at the time when contact was made with Sheffield, there was no Partner City Policy or assessment framework in place;

- Carries out further work in respect of identifying the potential opportunities with locations in **South Korea**, given Sheffield Hallam University's collaboration with representatives from Jeju Island, South Korea with the mutual desire to establish a health and wellbeing partnership.

Whilst acknowledging the historical 'friendships' with many other cities across the world, given the limited resources available there are no proposals to resurrect any of these relationships at this time.

2. HOW DOES THIS DECISION CONTRIBUTE?

- 2.1 This decision implements the Partner City Policy and is aligned to the principles considered by Strategy and Resources Policy Committee in November.
- 2.2 This report seeks to provide clarity in respect of the international relationships that Sheffield wishes to nurture and maintain, whilst acknowledging that some historical relationships have naturally come to an end, as the circumstances that initially brought us together no longer exist.
- 2.3 In having conducted this review, there is an opportunity to build upon some of our existing connections for mutual benefit and the delivery of specific outcomes.
- 2.4 As a council, we have limited financial and staffing resources and therefore need to focus on those relationships that have the greatest potential. It is not feasible to attempt to maintain meaningful relationships with upwards of 20 international locations.
- 2.5 The recently approved Sheffield City Goals acknowledge that Sheffield has made a significant contribution to the world and that we are a city with much to offer. The proposals contained within this report outline how we propose to engage with some of our key Partner Cities in this regard.

3. HAS THERE BEEN ANY CONSULTATION?

- 3.1 The Council is not required to consult with members of the public on this issue though many of the relationships described in Appendix A are the result of public engagement or promotion.
- 3.2 Members of the Council's three main political groups have all had an opportunity to be briefed and their views sought.

4. RISK ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

- 4.1 Equality Implications

- 4.1.1 The establishment of a Partner City Policy with a clear assessment framework was a response to concerns raised in that we could unwittingly be associating the City Council with questionable regimes that do not fit comfortably with our own organisation's aims, objectives and values.
- 4.1.2 Pursuant to the Equality Act 2010, ["the Act"] the Council must in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act,
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not,
 - Foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.

There may be relevant equalities implications arising from each Twinning and Partnership arrangement. Each new arrangement will have an individual Equality Impact Assessment carried out to assess its impact.

4.2 Financial and Commercial Implications

- 4.2.1 The preparation of this Report in itself does not have any specific financial implications, however, any decision-making that results in either a new international relationship being developed or a decision to reinvigorate an existing relationship, will potentially have financial considerations and needs to be costed out, prior to any significant activity taking place.

4.3 Legal Implications

- 4.3.1 While many of the city's international relationships are symbolic declarations rather than formal agreements some of the arrangements do engage consideration of the Council's statutory powers. There are powers under the Local Government Act 1972 that may be relevant, such as the power to incur expenditure in the interests of and bringing direct benefit to the area and some or all of its inhabitants (s137), or the power to do any thing conducive or incidental to the discharge of its functions (s111). Alternatively the "general power of competence" under s1 of the Localism Act 2011 may be applicable.
- 4.3.2 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report, but any future or consequential proposals, such as allocating funding to further a relationship or entering into formal agreements, will require future Policy Committee decisions in accordance with the Council's Constitution and the legal implications will be considered at that time.

4.4 Climate Implications

- 4.4.1 In preparing this report, there are no immediate climate implications envisaged. In effect, reducing the number of international locations we

are linked with has the potential to reduce our climate impact – there are a lesser number of locations that might require travel to and from.

- 4.4.2 Should approaches be received to partner with new locations, and when working with existing partners, consideration will be given as to how best to engage utilising technologies such as Teams wherever possible, as opposed to international travel being the default position.
- 4.4.3 As part of the assessment process to consider any new international partnerships, a Climate Impact Assessment will be undertaken in respect of each proposal. Where travel is required, consideration should be given to minimising carbon emissions, including alternatives to air travel.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 The alternative option is to retain the status quo. The development of proposals for a Partner City Policy, approved by Strategy and Resources Policy Committee in November 2023, was an acknowledgement that retaining the status quo was not appropriate. The review of existing international relationships is a direct result of that decision.

6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Development of the Partner City Policy included a commitment to undertake a follow-on review of all existing international relationships. Prior to this exercise, it is unclear whether any such review had ever been implemented previously.
- 6.2 The outcome of the review is that the City Council is able to focus on developing relationships with a much more manageable number of international locations which have a genuine desire to collaborate and where specific benefits can be identified.
- 6.3 This report presents the Council's first annual International Update. The intention is that a transparent overview of Sheffield's activities within the international arena will be provided each Municipal Year.

This page is intentionally left blank