



## Report to Policy Committee

**Author/Lead Officer of Report:** Nik Hamilton,  
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**Report of:** Executive Director - City Futures  
**Report to:** Strategy & Resources Committee  
**Date of Decision:** 20 November 2023  
**Subject:** Establishing a new Partner City Policy

Type of Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) undertaken	Initial <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Full <input type="checkbox"/>
Insert EIA reference number and attach EIA	<b>2408</b>	
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 (<b>report/appendix</b>) is not for publication because it contains exempt information under Paragraph (<b>insert relevant paragraph number</b>) of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).”</i></p>		

**Purpose of Report:**  
 Sheffield City Council does not currently have any formal Policy in place in respect of responding to approaches to establish new international relationships through such mechanisms as Twinning (sometimes referred to as Sister City agreements), through to entering into such things as Friendship or Collaborative agreements.

The Council regularly receives approaches to forge new relationships, whether this is to enter into specific agreements or simply to host a visiting delegation.

There is a need for clear objectives and decision-making criteria for entering into any Twinning / Sister City agreements or developing new less formal international links; identifying outputs and outcomes and the potential to link with key partners to help achieve wider benefits for the city and its residents.

With limited time and resources, deciding on what opportunities to pursue, requires transparent and consistent decision-making criteria. Such criteria should provide quantifiable value to the City and its residents, and be kept under review. Whilst

we may choose to maintain existing relationships, new opportunities for city partnership working will inevitably arise.

Given Sheffield's broad range of existing international links, with a variety of terminology in place, the purpose of this report is to propose the creation of a clear **Partner City Policy**, so called to ensure consideration of each of these different types of arrangements, and to provide a framework for:

a). Assessing new approaches, and b). Reviewing the effectiveness of existing international relationships.

The Council has scarce resources, which need to be focussed on improving service delivery and value for money to residents. International partnering arrangements may also create the potential for reputational risks as well as benefits for the Council and the city. For this reason, there must be clear and objective criteria for entering into and maintaining such arrangements. Criteria will establish whether a proposed arrangement will benefit and contribute to the life of the city and its residents.

Proposals for a draft Partner City Policy are attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

**Recommendations:**

This Paper is presented to Strategy and Resources Committee for consideration, on the basis of establishing a new Partner City Policy being a policy matter, not otherwise allocated to a Committee.

Members are being asked:

- To consider the current proposals for a Partner City Policy, as have been set out within Appendix 1;
- To authorise the General Counsel and Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Executive Director – City Futures to finalise the policy based upon the proposals (as currently set out within Appendix 1) and any observations made by the Committee.

**Background Papers:**  
Proposed Partner City Policy (draft).

<b>Lead Officer to complete:-</b>		
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: Natalia Govorukhina
		Legal: Petra Der Man
		Equalities & Consultation: Bashir Khan
		Climate: N/A
	<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	<b>SLB member who approved submission:</b>	Kate Martin, Executive Director – City Futures
3	<b>Committee Chair consulted:</b>	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.	
	<b>Lead Officer Name:</b> Nik Hamilton	<b>Job Title:</b> Investment Team Manager
	<b>Date:</b> 20 November 2023	

## 1. PROPOSAL

- 1.1 There is no legal requirement for local authorities to establish relationships with other locations around the globe. Such arrangements may however bring mutual benefits to the Council, the city and its international partners.
- 1.2 Sheffield has established relationships with at least 14 international cities, through Twinning; Sister City; Trade & Collaboration or Friendship links. These relationships include six designated Twin Cities and two Sister Cities. A full list of our current 'partner cities' can be found in the proposals for a Partner City Policy document (see Appendix 1). Our oldest formal international relationship dates back to 1920, when Sheffield chose to 'adopt' the French town of Bapaume.
- 1.3 There are currently no processes or agreed protocols in place when considering establishing new international relationships. Each case is considered on its own individual merits – whilst this allows a good degree of flexibility and enables us to move swiftly, there is currently no formal assessment criteria nor is there any mechanism in place to ensure consistency in terms of how such applications are and will be considered.
- 1.4 This is currently unsatisfactory for the Council and is clearly problematic for any potential international applicants too as they would not know the criteria upon which such relationships with the Council are to be judged, as well as being unsatisfactory for the residents of the City.
- 1.5 Historically, there have been some occasions where links have been established on the basis of individual connections, political affiliation or in response to a particular incident, such as a natural disaster. Creating a clear set of criteria will provide transparency and add to the Council's due diligence procedures.
- 1.6 Clarity is needed to demonstrate any and all tangible opportunities that may come from existing and new international relations, whether they are civic; business; cultural or educational, together with an assessment as to whether these are realistically achievable. In addition, the expectations and perceived benefits to both parties need to be considered and capable of being measured.
- 1.7 Currently, we also find ourselves with historical links with cities, where the relationship has long since become 'dormant'. Establishing a new Partner City Policy would not only provide a framework to assess new applications, but could be part of the mechanism to be used to consider existing relationships and whether we might wish to reinvigorate or withdraw from them, going forward.
- 1.8 The proposed assessment criteria is detailed within the draft Policy

appended to this report. The criteria has been developed through a process of reviewing our existing relationships to understand the rationale behind establishing such linkages, together with informal benchmarking activity and discussions with other Core Cities, in order to establish how they respond to approaches received.

- 1.9 In establishing a Partner City Policy, it is proposed that this is a precursor to a wider **Sheffield International Strategy**, which alongside the proposed assessment criteria outlined, would also incorporate focused market international trade opportunities and seek to re-align specific international activities with City partner organisations. The Sheffield International Strategy, together with an estimation of resource requirements would be the subject of a further Committee report, in due course.

## **2. HOW DOES THIS DECISION CONTRIBUTE?**

- 2.1 A Partner City Policy would seek to align to the strategic priorities contained within current corporate plans. For the moment, this fits with the 'Our Sheffield' Delivery Plan 2022-23. As such, it fits with the series of key steps, including: clear strategic goals which show what we want to achieve for this city and an improvement journey that helps us to quickly respond to our challenges and grasp opportunities. Furthermore, 'Our Sheffield' specifically identified a need to improve how Sheffield City Council does business and the services it provides. These principles are inherent in the development of the proposed Partner City Policy.
- 2.2 Of particular note, under Goal 6 'Clean Economic Growth', we want Sheffield to "*punch its weight*" and raise the profile of the city nationally and internationally. A Partner City Policy should provide a mechanism to properly consider opportunities, balanced against any relevant risks with the potential to enhance and maintain Sheffield's profile, nationally and internationally.
- 2.3 In time, it is expected that a Partner City Policy, once finalised, would be reviewed to ensure that it is aligned to priorities that will be contained within the emerging Council Plan and Sheffield City Goals, which are both currently in development.
- 2.4 Having clear assessment criteria embedded within the Policy will provide a mechanism to consider how we might deliver tangible benefits to Sheffield's residents and communities, with the ability to evaluate and measure outcomes.
- 2.5 There is an opportunity to build upon existing connections via previous and existing projects and partnerships.
- 2.6 The existence of a clear Policy will provide clarity in respect of the decision-making process, whilst being cognisant of the limited human and financial resources available in respect of establishing new international relationships.

### **3. HAS THERE BEEN ANY CONSULTATION?**

- 3.1 The Council is not required to consult with members of the public on this issue. There is an acknowledgement that our current internal decision-making processes in the context of international relations are lacking and leaves the Council open to challenge. Hence, the decision to develop a Partner City Policy.
- 3.2 Members of the three main Political parties have all had an opportunity to be briefed and their views sought on the initial development of the assessment criteria to be used.

### **4. RISK ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION**

#### **4.1 Equality Implications**

- 4.1.1 There are implications and risks organisationally and City-wide for Sheffield in continuing to operate in a more 'ad hoc' manner in respect of international relationships and partnership work. At present, there is no framework in place to consider the implications of particular alliances with identified cities and/or countries. The concern is 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. Without any agreed due diligence procedures in place, we could inadvertently be linked with locations that might have less than desirable Human Rights records, for example. A clear rationale for the Council to be able to say 'No' if an approach does not fit with our stated aims is needed.

#### **4.2 Financial and Commercial Implications**

- 4.2.1 The development of a Partner City Policy, itself, does not have any specific financial implications, other than the requirement for existing staffing resources to undertake the assessment of any new approaches. The costs associated with development of a Partner City Policy will be managed within existing City Futures revenue budgets.
- 4.2.2 It is proposed that a specific Sheffield International Strategy is developed, there is currently no budget identified to fund this activity and it is proposed that a separate report pertaining to the development of the Sheffield International Strategy is brought to Strategy and Resources Committee, for this to be considered. A business case will be developed to outline economic benefits, links to strategic goals, the costs and funding options.

#### **4.3 Legal Implications**

- 4.3.1 The Council, has the statutory power, to enter into new twinning and partnership arrangements, pursuant to s. 1 of the Localism Act 2011,

commonly known as the “general power of competence”. (The general power is provided subject to the restriction that its use is not prohibited by other legislation). When exercising such a power, the Council must have regard to the local council plan / strategy.

4.3.2 The form and content of formal Twinning / Sister City Agreements are not prescribed and are not legally binding. They may be amended, unilaterally reviewed and brought to an end by either party without penalties being imposed. The signing of a formal Twinning / Sister City Agreement merely facilitates the acknowledgment of and/or setting up of a long-term, trusting relationship.

4.3.3 The proposals for the draft Policy are being taken to the Strategy and Resources Committee, on the basis that the Council’s Constitution provides that included within the Corporate Responsibilities of the Strategy and Resources Committee is the “Responsibility... for any policy matter not otherwise allocated to a Committee...”.

4.3.4 The data protection legislative principles may apply to any relevant information shared pursuant to any agreement entered into in accordance with this Policy. (This is in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations 2018). Accordingly, where appropriate, the City Council’s Data Protection Officer will be appraised of each Agreement.

4.3.5 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 protected characteristic and those who do not,
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

4.3.6 There may be relevant equalities implications arising from each Twinning and Partnership arrangement.

#### 4.4 Climate Implications

4.4.1 In adopting a new Partner City Policy, there are no immediate climate implications envisaged. That said, should approaches be received to partner with new locations, it is suggested that consideration be given as to how best to effect a meaningful relationship with prospective partners utilising technologies such as Teams, as opposed to international travel being the default position.

4.4.2 As part of the assessment process to consider any new international partnerships, it is suggested that a Climate Impact Assessment be undertaken in respect of each proposal. Where travel is required, consideration should be given to minimising carbon emissions.

#### 4.5 Other Implications

- 4.5.1 None envisaged. The implementation of an agreed Partner City Policy does not have any implications in respect of property or public health, for example.

### **5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 5.1 The alternative option is to retain the status quo and not have any form of stated policy. For the reasons outlined elsewhere in this report, this is not considered to be an appropriate position to continue with, either for the Council, nor for any potential cities that may wish to consider entering into a formal relationship with the City.

### **6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.1 Implementation of a Partner City Policy, once approved, would seek to address a current gap within the Council's procedures, ensuring that there is a degree of rigour in our assessment of new approaches and that decisions are taken that are fully informed.
- 6.2 Intended outcomes are such that where Sheffield chooses to enter into new international partnerships, the new relationship will have been thoroughly considered in respect of such aspects as: existing synergies; the potential benefits to each party; resource requirements; reputational aspects and potential alignment to key stakeholder activities and strategies.



## APPENDIX 1

# Sheffield City Council – DRAFT Partner City Policy

## Introduction

Worldwide, significant impetus has been given to establishing formal international links between cities, especially following the Second World War, as a means of developing friendship and mutual understanding, together with the prospect of deriving economic benefit.

Sheffield has actively developed formal international relationships for over 70 years, through a range of mechanisms including Twinning / Sister City arrangements or Friendship Agreements. Some of these have been in place for many decades. Given changes in policy, combined with resource constraints, some of these relationships are less active than they were previously.

Note that the 'Sister Cities' terminology – as opposed to 'Twinning' - is typically used in the Americas and Asia, whereas 'Twinning' is the more accepted term in Europe, although in recent years, the 2 terms are often used interchangeably. In reality, there appears to be little distinction between the two in terms of the parameters of the relationship, rather this tends to be detailed in the specific documentation signed by the respective parties.

There are approximately 2,000 Twinning arrangements in Britain, c. 75% of which are with French and German authorities. There is no fixed definition or model of Twinning or Partnership arrangement. A Twinning link is customarily defined as an agreement involving co-operation between two communities in different countries, endorsed by both local authorities. The idea is to pair towns and cities in different countries with the focus being to foster human contacts. Twin towns often, but not always, have similar populations and characteristics.

The two twinned communities typically organise projects and activities around a range of issues and develop an understanding of historical, cultural and lifestyle similarities and differences. These activities can involve a wide range of community members.

Twinning / Sister City relationships represent a long-term commitment between the partners, not a short-term project partnership. They should always be able to survive changes in political leadership and short-term difficulties of one or other partner, and support each other in times of need.

Sheffield has established relationships with at least 14 international cities, through Twinning; Sister City; Trade & Collaboration or Friendship links. These relationships include six designated Twin Cities and two Sister Cities. Given Sheffield's broad range of existing international links, with a variety of terminology in place, this policy has been named a **Partner City Policy**, to ensure consideration of each of these arrangements.

Going forward, for the purposes of this Policy, it is appropriate to agree a hierarchy of relationships:

- **Twinning / Sister City relationships** should be seen as formal longer-term agreements (albeit with the inclusion of agreed review points);
- **Partner relationships including: Partnership Agreements, Declarations of Friendships; Memoranda of Understanding; Letters of Support, Trade & Collaboration Agreements** are more likely to be time-limited arrangements, where each party receives short-term benefits. These partnerships may be renewed or converted into Twinning / Sister City relationships, at a later date, if desired.

- The Council will need to be clear at the outset as to what form of arrangement it wishes to enter into.

The approach outlined above is for a tiered system, whereby initial approaches do not automatically lead to a Twinning / Sister City Agreement being agreed and signed at the outset. For example, a 'Declaration of Friendship' may be more appropriate in the first instance, until such time as the potential relationship has been scoped out and the resource implications considered.

This tiered system could also be of particular benefit where there is a desire to develop some form of symbolic relationship, or to express solidarity with a particular country or location, where there may be limited potential for further collaboration, or economic or trade opportunities. That said, there still needs to be some form of framework to assess individual opportunities to be able to manage expectations; consider resource implications and effect a degree of due diligence.

Sheffield currently has the following established international relationships with no end nor review periods:

### **China**

**Anshan** – Twin City since 1983;

**Chengdu** - Twin City since 2010;

**Daqing** - Trade & Collaboration Agreement since 2016;

**Nanchang** - Trade & Collaboration Agreement since 2016.

### **Europe**

**Bapaume**, France - 'Adoptive' relationship since 1920;

**Bochum**, Germany – Twin City since 1950;

**Donetsk**, Ukraine – Twin City since 1956;

**Khmelnytskyi**, Ukraine – Twin City since 2022.

### **The Americas**

**Pittsburgh**, USA - Sister City since 1980;

**Esteli**, Nicaragua – Twin City since 1984.

### **Japan**

**Kawasaki** - Friendship Agreement since 1990;

**Minoh** – Proposed Friendship Agreement in 1992 (*appears not to have been signed – reasons unknown*).

### **Africa**

**Kitwe**, Zambia – Sister City since 1981.

## Asia

**Kotli**, Pakistan-administered Kashmir - 'Declaration of Friendship' since 1994;

**Jeonju**, Korea - 'Exchange City Agreement' since 2013.

Sheffield City Council is also a signatory to a 'Memorandum of Understanding on Bilateral Cooperation relating to Small and Medium Businesses' with the **Small and Medium Business Administration of the Republic of Korea**; although, there have been no further developments in this regard since the agreement was entered into approximately 5 years ago.

We are also a member of **EuroCities**, a network of more than 200 cities in 38 countries, representing 130 million people, formed as a mechanism to encourage collaboration and the sharing of best practice.

Sheffield became a member of the **World Conference for Peace Through Inter-City Solidarity** in September 1994.

## **The Rationale Behind and the Benefits of International Partnering**

There is no fundamental requirement to establish relationships with other locations around the globe. Such arrangements can however bring mutual benefits to the Council, the city and its international partners.

The key principles that guide our international relations work should ensure we manage our relationships with a focus and aim to bring a rationale to our international linkages, one that focuses on mutual benefits between Sheffield and the partner city or region.

Sheffield City Council is keen to embed international relations corporately and to promote the city internationally as a place to invest, visit and live and to strengthen ties with our existing partner cities through mutually beneficial initiatives and exchanges, where appropriate.

The City Council is one of many key stakeholders and agencies who have a role to play in international linkages and work collectively to play a full and productive role.

Developing links or partnerships can support with achieving policy objectives such as culture; sports; heritage, and links with diaspora, economic development as well as tourism. There may be opportunities to work on problems or develop innovative solutions with partners around key challenges such as urban regeneration, smart cities, climate change, for example.

Potential mutual benefits include:

- Exchange of knowledge, skills and experience;
- Trade and investment opportunities;
- Increasing cultural awareness, including knowledge and understanding of the places of origin;
- Increased tolerance and understanding;
- Enhanced opportunities for youth activities, and
- The development of close friendships and ties built up over many years.

## **Community Links**

Across the UK, historically, the creation and running of traditional Twinning / Sister City arrangements has often been a community-led process and may have arisen from demand and interest from within the community either seeking a new link or responding to a request from elsewhere. Some towns and cities specifically have community-led Town Twinning Associations, often on an individual membership basis, with approaches for support made to their respective Councils, as required.

From a Sheffield perspective, links with Nicaragua were initially established via the Sheffield Estelí Society and focused on humanitarian aid and supporting education and environmental projects, although activities appear to have diminished in recent years. However, it appears that the majority of our international relationships have tended to be Council initiated and led.

An alternative to a formal Twinning / Sister City arrangement is for the Council to adopt a role of initial enabler and facilitator and thereafter have a limited, less formal role that would fit within the looser Partnership model. In these assistances, the Council may not even be required to commit to or sign anything, rather involvement might be limited to hosting an introductory meeting or effecting introductions between appropriate organisations.

Both types of arrangement have their respective benefits.

## **Partnering Criteria**

There is a need for clear objectives and decision-making criteria for entering into any Twinning / Sister City Agreements or developing new less formal international links; identifying outputs and outcomes and the potential to link with key partners to help achieve wider benefits for the city and its residents.

Sheffield City Council regularly receives approaches to forge new relationships, whether this is to enter into specific agreements or simply to host a visiting delegation. With limited time and resources, deciding on what opportunities to pursue, requires decision-making criteria and robust assessment and will require a rationale that is rooted in evidence. Whilst we may choose to maintain existing relationships, new opportunities for city partnership working will undoubtedly arise.

Opportunities may be generated either by our work or via partners through their own activities and will require measured assessment to determine value for the City Council and our stakeholders. Using objective criteria, we will evaluate each new opportunity and each current relationship against a range of economic, tourism, cultural, historical connections, educational, and operational factors before providing recommendations on the merit of any new opportunity. With a mind to shared values such as their ability to demonstrate the promotion of human rights, gender equality and advocate for social justice, respect and diversity of cultures.

Twinning / Sister City or other forms of Partnership Agreements can offer benefits especially when there is a clear objective, with a strong, shared interest, community involvement and commitment of the partners involved. Such partnerships can offer an important opportunity to learn, share ideas and support community engagement.

The criteria detailed over the following pages should be used to assess new opportunities and approaches.

## ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

### Location Overview

- Is the location a “good fit” for Sheffield in terms of:
  - (a) Population size;
  - (b) Population profiles (e.g. age, gender, race);
  - (c) Economic profile - Key sectors / main industries etc.
  - (d) Type of governmental structures – e.g. is there a sufficient similarity in powers and span of competence of each local authority?
  - (e) Its ability to bring tangible benefits to Sheffield.
- Is the partner, city or network making progress against similar challenges to Sheffield and are they doing so in a progressive manner?
- Does Sheffield have any existing partnerships or Twin / Sister Cities in the same country?
- What other existing international town/city links does the partner, city or network already have in place?
- Key dates to be aware of – e.g. Independence Days; City Days; Keys Dates in the Civic Calendar.

### Strategic Fit

- Does the proposal fit in with the Council’s stated aims? (as currently set out in the ‘Our Sheffield’ Delivery Plan 2022-23. Note: In due course, alignment will need to be considered against the emerging Council Plan and Sheffield City Goals, currently in development).
- Does the proposal fit with strategic plans of the Council’s key partners? e.g. Situated in a target market identified in the SYMCA Internationalisation Plan, target market for international students.
- Will there be tangible benefits for Sheffield’s residents, businesses or partners?
- What is the rationale behind the approach – either TO Sheffield or FROM Sheffield e.g. Trade & Investment opportunities; Cultural opportunities; Education; Civic elements etc.
- Does Sheffield have any membership or affiliations to organisations in common with the partner, city or network?

### Profile

- Will it give Sheffield significant and positive PR?
- Will Sheffield City Council’s involvement help boost the profile of city partners, helping them to achieve mutually shared objectives?

## Due Diligence Considerations

- Are there any potential risks including reputational issues through association with the location and/or key individuals e.g. alleged corruption and/or Human Rights issues; conflicts of interest. Are there any political circumstances and/or special relationships / causes being championed that we, the City Council, need to be aware of?

## Connections

- Are there pre-existing links with the partner, city or network in respect of projects, networks or people to people dialogue?
- Is there an existing diaspora community in Sheffield?
- Are there significant numbers of international students from the country of origin studying in Sheffield?
- Are there any established companies located in Sheffield from the country of origin?

## Resources

- Do we have the resources (both staffing and financial) to enter into the project or partnership?
- Does the project have the potential to generate additional revenue or capital resources for Sheffield? e.g. Horizon Europe Funding.

## Purpose

- What is the Council seeking to gain through establishing a formal relationship with this partner, city or network?
  - (a) Social and cultural exchanges;
  - (b) Technical/knowledge sharing regarding common problems;
  - (c) Tackling environmental issues, regeneration, community safety, health promotion and community cohesion;
  - (d) Increasing educational opportunities for students (language learning, global awareness);
  - (e) Supporting trade and investment opportunities.
- Perceived Benefits of Engagement a). For Sheffield, b) For the applicant partner, city or network?
- Expectations of the partner, city or network? i.e. What are they seeking to achieve from collaboration?

## **Basis of Relationship**

- What form of arrangement will be entered into? (*e.g. Twinning/Sister City Agreement; Partnership Agreement; Declaration of Friendship; Memoranda of Understanding; Letter of Support, Trade & Collaboration Agreements etc.*)
- Is the arrangement sufficiently sustainable?
- Is there is a sufficient commonality of interest to sustain and grow the link within the specific and broader communities in the area?
- Are the proposed outcomes for the relationship measurable?

## **Decision-Making**

Before entering into any new Partnership arrangement, the Council will make an assessment of the proposal against the criteria set out above. The assessment will determine:

- Whether a formal Twinning / Sister City agreement is appropriate;
- If so, the recommended terms and nature of the arrangement;
- If a formal Twinning / Sister City agreement is considered not to be appropriate, whether a Partnership agreement would suffice;
- If so, the recommended terms and nature of the arrangement;
- If neither scenario above is deemed appropriate, whether an informal, community-based arrangement could be facilitated.

The table overleaf, provides an example of the suggested hierarchy for international partnerships.

Form of Relationship	Content	Documentation	Examples	Duration	Review Timescales
Twin / Sister City	Agreement to exchange information, knowledge and expertise, and develop strategic actions or joint initiatives and projects in defined areas, e.g. Education; Culture; Sport; Trade & Investment	Agreement ( <i>Note: a separate Agreement or MoU may be developed for specific joint projects to define the objectives and tasks required, if particularly detailed in scope</i> )	Sheffield & Khmelnytskyi (signed 2022)	Anticipated to be longer-term (potentially in excess of 10 years)	Every 2 years, with ability for either party to exit Agreement
Trade & Collaboration	Specific to a sector, or an individual opportunity e.g. a trade mission or contract	Memorandum of Understanding	Sheffield & SME Administration of the Republic of Korea (2015)	Aligned to the nature of the particular transaction	Envisaged to be every 6-12 months, dependent on the transaction and when it concludes
Partnership	A joint working arrangement where the partners agree to co-operate to achieve a common goal and share relevant information	Partnership Agreement	Sheffield & Jeonju (signed 2013)	Aligned to the nature of the particular collaboration	Envisaged to be every 6-12 months, dependent on the collaboration and when it concludes
Friendship	More ceremonial in nature, with language focussing on a commitment to fostering understanding, cooperation, and mutual benefit ( <i>as opposed to specific projects</i> )	Declaration of Friendship	Sheffield & Kotli (signed 1994)	Short-term	Every 12 months
Support	Formal response to a particular incident e.g. natural disaster or conflict	Formal Letter	N/A	Short-term	N/A

Current Partnership arrangements should also be reviewed periodically against these criteria. If an arrangement is felt to be no longer bringing benefit to the Council or city, consideration should be given whether to seek to revive or terminate the arrangement.

## Roles and Responsibilities

Councillors and Officers instrumental in proposing new relationships must ensure the following:

- Information in respect of the relationship is provided in a timely manner to ensure that this can be featured in an Annual Report on International Relations.
- Facilitate two-way communication and commit to regular engagement with representatives from the location, whether that be in-person meetings, or online meetings via Teams; engaging in visits or hosting representatives from the location in Sheffield. Care will always be taken to ensure that no information will be shared that may contravene the principles of data protection contained within the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations 2018.

## Finances

It is recognised that the Council must play its part in hosting civic events for visitors and there will be an annual review undertaken as part of the budget setting process to ensure that sufficient funding is made available. The need for flexibility is noted due to the scheduling of visits and it is therefore accepted that there might be some circumstances that necessitate ad-



hoc expenditure in this situation. Income and expenditure will be monitored to ensure that budgets are kept under control and to assist with future financial planning.

In the event that gifts are exchanged, the Council's current policy stipulates when the Lord Mayor makes a presentation of a personal gift it will be paid for from the Lord Mayor's Budget. Going forward, should a budget allocation be found for International Relations, where it is appropriate that gifts be presented to **international** partners, it is suggested that the expenditure should be made from the International Relations Budget, should a budget be approved. Should a budget allocation be found, the intention would be to establish a dedicated stock of appropriate, cost-effective civic gifts.

## **Legislative Basis for Twinning / Sister City Relationships**

While not legally binding, the signing of a formal Twinning / Sister City Agreement facilitates the setting up of a long-term, trusting relationship. Its form and content are not prescribed. It may be amended, unilaterally reviewed and brought to an end.

The approval of this Policy is a matter for the City Council's Strategy and Resources Committee.

The Council, has the statutory power, to enter into new twinning and partnership arrangements, pursuant to s. 1 of the Localism Act 2011, commonly known as the "general power of competence". (The general power is provided subject to the restriction that its use is not prohibited by other legislation). When exercising such a power, the Council must have regard to the local council plan / strategy.

The data protection legislative principles apply to any relevant information shared pursuant to any agreement entered into in accordance with this Policy. (This is in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations 2018.) Accordingly, where appropriate, the City Council's Data Protection Officer will be appraised of each agreement.

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 protected characteristic and those who do not,
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

There may be relevant equalities implications arising from each Twinning and Partnership arrangement.

## **Informal Agreements:**

There are opportunities to explore / facilitate less formal future partnership arrangements in circumstances where there is a mutual interest and benefit that fits with the city's objectives, however, there needs to be a clear interest or commitment from the partners involved to develop and sustain the links. This type of arrangement is likely to be a less formal commitment.

Friendship / Co-operation Agreements / MOUs have become more popular in recent years where partners identify areas of interest in which the partner cities or regions are committing themselves to explore and a timeframe for any proposed collaboration.

## **Governance Structure**

### **Twinning / Sister City Agreements**

Step 1:

The Lord Mayor / Elected Members / Chief Executive / Executive Directors may initiate the process.

Step 2:

The proposal must be referred initially to the Strategy & Resources Committee for their consideration. The Committee will determine whether they wish the opportunity to be explored further and if so, delegate authority to relevant Officers to undertake an assessment.

Step 3:

In order to undertake a formal assessment using the criteria laid out within the Partner City Policy, research will be carried out by relevant Officers and informal contact made with the city or region. An assessment will be undertaken and a decision made by Officers. A summary report of the decision will be produced by Officers and reported back to the Strategy & Resources Committee, in due course. The decision will also be included within the Annual Report of International Relationships, produced each municipal year.

Step 4:

If a decision to proceed is made, more formal communications will commence with the relevant city and an agreement between the two cities is developed and agreed.

All Twinning / Sister City Agreements should be time bound with a review process undertaken every two years.

### **Relinquishing a Twinning / Sister City Agreement**

It must be noted that relinquishing an Agreement requires careful consideration and should involve the Strategy & Resources Committee before any such decision is taken.

There are a number of considerations that elected Members are required to take into account when approving an Agreement. These considerations would also need to be carefully reviewed again if there is any proposal to relinquish the Agreement.

## **Governance Structure**

### **Partnership Agreements**

Step 1:

The Lord Mayor / Elected Members / Chief Executive / Executive Directors may initiate the process.

Step 2:

Request reviewed and assessed by relevant Officers. If deemed appropriate, Officers will consult with the appropriate Executive Director to ensure there are adequate resources in place to support the Agreement.

Step 3: If a decision to proceed is made, a summary report of the decision will be produced by Officers and reported back to the Strategy & Resources Committee, in due course. The decision will also be included within the Annual Report of International Relationships, produced each municipal year.

Step 4:

If the recommendation to proceed is agreed, follow up research and contact with the city or region is undertaken by relevant Officers.

All Partnership Agreements should be time bound.

### **Risks**

The main risks are identified below:

- Reputation – In considering developing new partnerships, the process must foster collective support from the outset, addressing some of the issues identified with previous Twinning / Sister City relationships, ensuring that we do not align ourselves with partners that do not fit with the Council's stated policies and/or may cause reputational harm.
- Outcomes – The outcomes we are seeking to secure from new partnerships must be shared and tangible. They need to be realistic and understood. There is a risk that we enter into commitments that the city cannot deliver.
- Resources – Currently we do not have any dedicated staffing or budget resource specific to international relations. To be effective we need to ensure that appropriate resources are allocated.
- Strategic Fit - Once the Partner City Policy has been agreed, there is a need to have the ability to review the Policy, as appropriate, to ensure that it continues to fit with the strategic priorities of the Council. In particular, once the emerging Council Plan and Sheffield City Goals have been signed off, the Partner City Policy needs to be considered to ensure strategic fit.
- Flexibility – Relationships change over the time. Circumstances may mean that there is a need to review partnerships entered into. The Partner City Policy needs to have sufficient flexibility to enable relationships to be reviewed and potentially relinquished, if the arrangement no longer fits with the Council's priorities or has the potential to cause reputational damage.

## **Conclusion**

It is without doubt that international partnerships can bring many benefits to the Council and residents of the city but only if they fit within the Council's priorities and are vibrant and active.

Our international relations efforts will further ensure our elected Members play a key civic leadership role and that the assets at the Council's disposal are utilised to promote the city.

It must be recognised that the Council has scarce resources, which need to be focussed on improving service delivery and value for money to residents. International partnering arrangements can also create reputational risks as well as benefits for the Council and the city. For this reason, there must be clear, objective criteria for entering into and maintaining such arrangements. Criteria will establish whether a proposed arrangement will benefit and contribute to the life of the city and its residents.

**Nik Hamilton, Investment Team Manager**

**October 2023**