

Bath & North East Somerset Council		
MEETING:	Council	
MEETING DATE:	20 July 2023	
TITLE:	'Friendship Agreement' with Oleksandriya City Council, Ukraine	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM/		
List of attachments to this report:		
Appendix – Friendship Agreement between Bath and North East Somerset Council, UK and Oleksandriya City Council, Ukraine		

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 B&NES Council has consistently stood in solidarity with Ukraine following the Russian invasion on 24 February 2022. Part of this response involved dialogue between the council, the Mayor of Oleksandriya City Council – a city in central Ukraine, similar in population to Bath – and the Ambassador of Ukraine to the United Kingdom. This relationship has led to the formation of a new local group, the **Friends of Oleksandriya**.
- 1.2 To further develop the relationship with the territorial community of Oleksandriya, Council, at its meeting of 16 March 2023, resolved to pursue and formalise a friendship agreement between B&NES Council and the city of Oleksandriya.
- 1.3 Delegated authority was given to the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council to negotiate, agree and sign the friendship agreement on behalf of B&NES Council. The Leader has exercised this authority and Council is now invited to give its approval to invite the Mayor of Oleksandriya City Council to counter-sign the document on 21 July 2023.

2 RECOMMENDATION

Council is asked to;

- 2.1 **Note the attached friendship agreement developed in collaboration between Bath and North East Somerset Council, Oleksandriya City Council and local group - Friends of Oleksandriya**
- 2.2 **Note that the Leader, under delegated authority provided by Council – 16 March 2023, has signed the friendship agreement on behalf of B&NES Council**
- 2.3 **Give its approval to invite the Mayor of Oleksandriya City Council to counter-sign and finalise the friendship agreement on behalf of Oleksandriya City Council on 21 July 2023**

3 THE REPORT

- 3.1 Since the start of the Russian invasion on 24 February 2022, B&NES Council has stood in solidarity with Ukraine. Bath and North East Somerset's communities have welcomed more than three hundred and fifty refugees under the government's Homes for Ukraine scheme.
- 3.2 The council has played a key role in helping Ukrainian guests integrate into local communities. For example, establishing the B&NES Ukrainian Support Fund. This made available two rounds of £10,000 for local charities and voluntary groups to provide a range of services that promote integration, organise local events and signpost to advice and support.
- 3.3 A public statement was made to the May 2022 Council meeting by the local group '**Bath Stands with Ukraine**'. It proposed a link between B&NES Council and a Ukrainian city similar in population to Bath.
- 3.4 This subsequently led to dialogue opening between the Council, the Mayor of the Oleksandriya City Council, and the Ambassador of Ukraine to the United Kingdom. Oleksandriya is a central Ukraine city with a population of approximately eighty thousand, located in Kirovohradska Oblast, within the Kirovohrad region, 350km from Kyiv.
- 3.5 The creation of a local group the **Friends of Oleksandriya** emerged from these developing relationships.
- 3.6 Council, at its meeting of 16 March 2023, agreed to further deepen these connections through the development of a friendship agreement. Although not legally binding it would form a commitment from both parties to:
 - deepen relationships by strengthening and formalising bilateral relationships and promoting cooperation and support.
 - provide a framework to establish and strengthen cultural and other community ties, fostering co-operation based on respect, equality, and mutual benefit.
 - promote awareness between the two communities and identify environmental, social, cultural, educational, health and wellbeing and other opportunities for joint working.
- 3.7 In response, a council working group was established to work with the B&NES based Friends of Oleksandriya and the city council of Oleksandriya. This group,

chaired by Cllr Chris Dando, alongside Councillors' Ruth Malloy and Joanna Wright met on 20 April 2023, where an initial draft friendship agreement was developed and subsequently shared with Oleksandriya City Council and the Friends of Oleksandriya.

- 3.8 From the initial draft, the agreement, as attached, was finalised following consideration over several weeks from both Parties and stakeholder (Friends of Oleksandriya). The most significant amendment being that the proposed relationship is now between the two respective councils rather than B&NES and the city of Oleksandriya. This amendment has legal approval and ensures consistency between the two Parties.
- 3.9 Under the delegated authority provided by Council – 16 March 2023, the Leader has signed the friendship agreement on behalf of B&NES. To finalise the process, Council is now requested to give approval to invite the Mayor of Oleksandriya City Council to counter-sign the document at an event scheduled to take place on 21 July 2023.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 The friendship agreement is not a legally binding document. The intention is to enter into this agreement for the purposes of establishing friendship, recognising bilateral relations, and promoting co-operation between the two Parties.
- 4.2 The council has experience of developing/formalising a friendship agreement. In 2009 signing an agreement with China's Jianxi Province (and city of Jingdezhen). Council agreed to terminate this agreement at its meeting on 17 November 2022.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 5.1 The council has provided the officer support to develop and finalise the friendship agreement. It is anticipated that any future activities to emerge from the relationship would be managed through existing resources, although any additional costs would require the identification of appropriate funding. The B&NES working group has agreed to continue to act as a key stakeholder on any opportunities to emerge as the relationship between the two Parties matures.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the council's decision-making risk management guidance.

7 EQUALITIES

- 7.1 A full EIA is being developed in parallel to the agreement.

8 CLIMATE CHANGE

8.1 The friendship agreement will promote awareness between the two communities and offer opportunities for joint working in relation to the climate and ecological emergency.

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 The Council at its May 2022 meeting was asked by local group **Bath Stands with Ukraine** to consider pursuing a link with a comparable Ukrainian city. The statement suggested pursuing a less formal arrangement than a twinning agreement, as would be led by the Charter Trustees of the City of Bath. Due to the urgency of the request, the desire to demonstrate a council wide commitment, and the council's previous experience it is felt a friendship agreement best meets this request.

10 CONSULTATION

10.1 The Council's Monitoring Officer has had the opportunity to input into the report.

The Leader of the Council and the council working group have been in continued dialogue with local group Friends of Oleksandriya and Oleksandriya City Council in co-producing the friendship agreement.

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Background papers	
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